piano no mori
chapter 59
p n y x t r
barbapapa
Unproductive

ピアノの森 8

一色まこと

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一色まこと

講談社

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定価：本体514円(税別)

The Perfect World of KAI

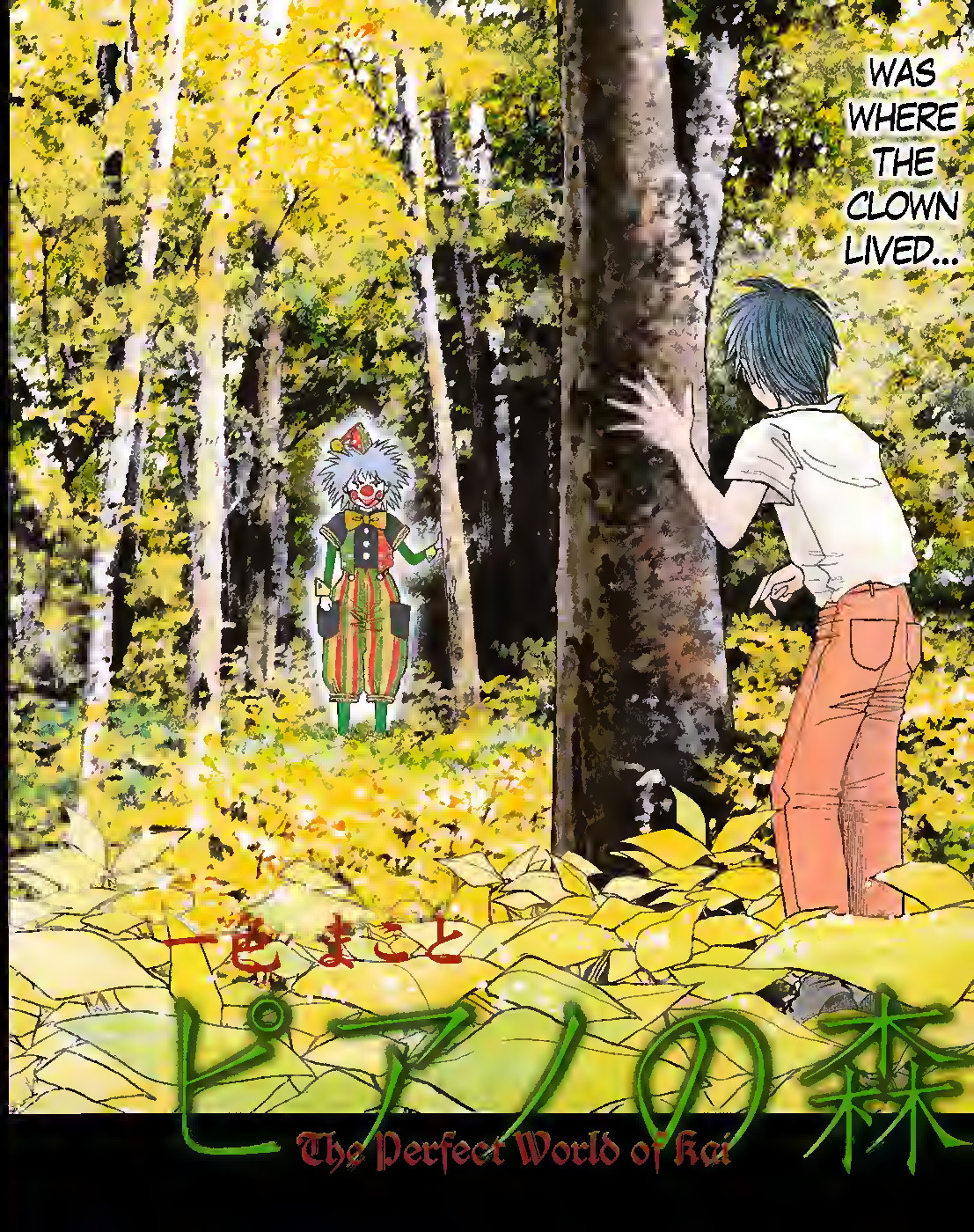
THE SAME DREAM AGAIN.

AGAIN.

RUNNING AWAY, RUNNING, RUNNING.

I WAS PANICKING, RUNNING AWAY, BEING CHASED.

AND I WAS IN DESPAIR.



The Perfect World of KAI

8

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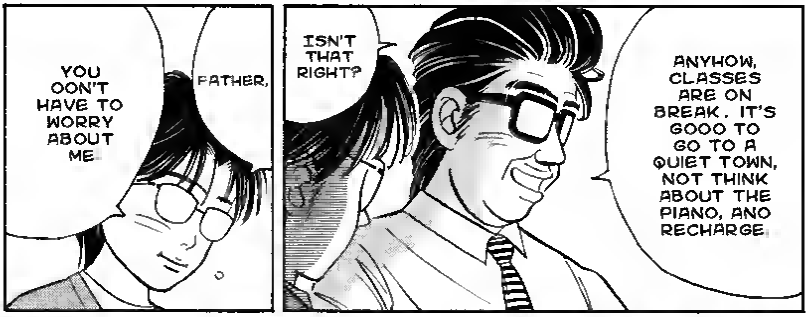
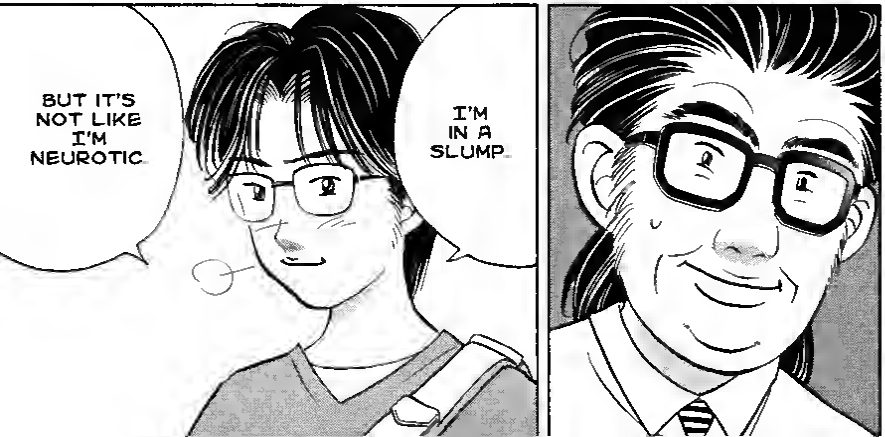
This work is a piece of fiction.
Any resemblance to actual people, organizations, and/or events are purely coincidental.

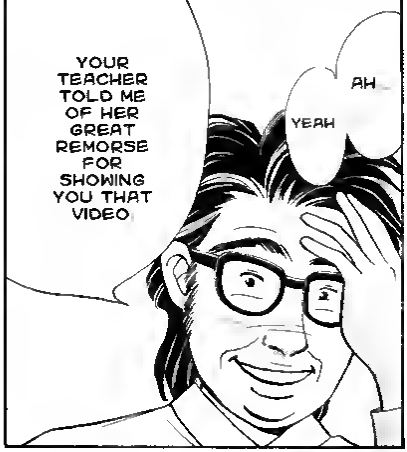
Chapter 59 Slump

FATHER.
AH...
OVER HERE, SYUHEI!!
HAHA.. WELL, I HAD WORK IN JAPAN SO I FLEW IN!
I DIDN'T THINK IT WOULD BE YOU COMING TO PICK ME UP, FATHER!
YOU'VE GROWN BIGGER SINCE I LAST SAW YOU, THREE MONTHS AGO.
YOU LOOK MUCH BETTER THAN I IMAGINED.

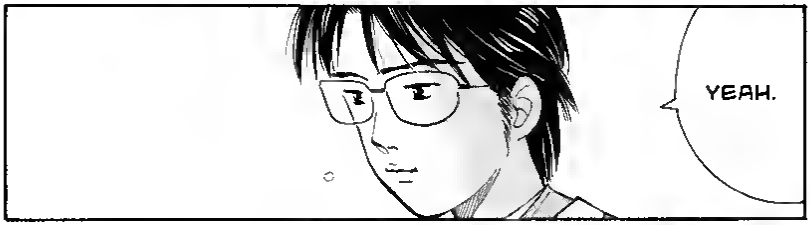
GRANDMA IS JOYFULLY ANTICIPATING YOUR RETURN, AFTER HEARING THAT YOU WERE COMING HOME!
AHAHA...
HAS IT BEEN FIVE YEARS!? SINCE YOU LAST CAME BACK

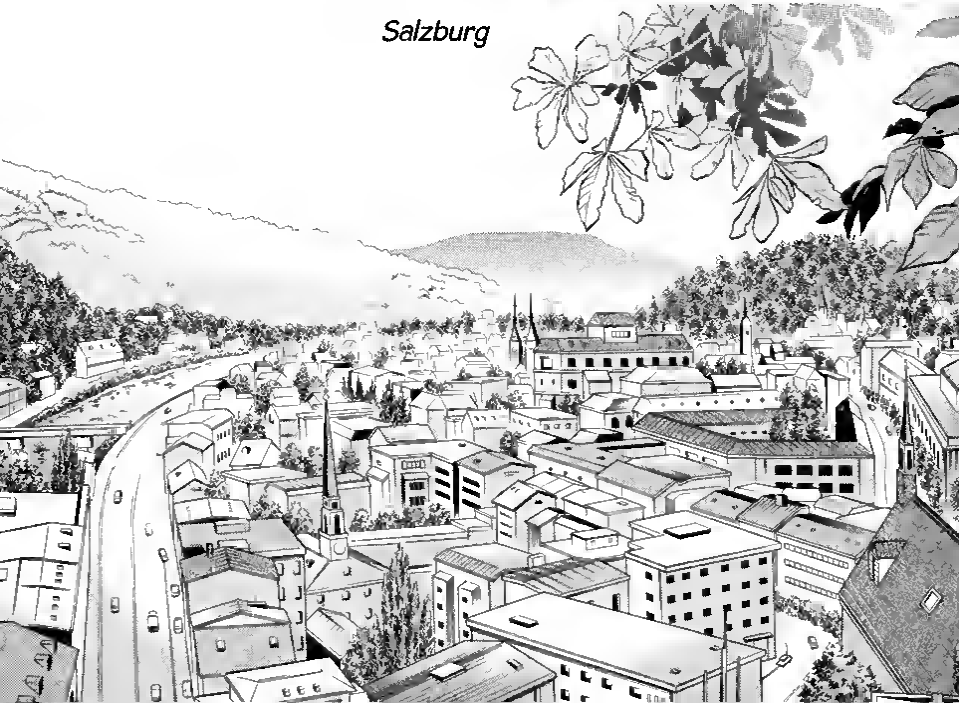

FATHER,
YOU OON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT ME.
ISN'T THAT RIGHT?
ANYHOW, CLASSES ARE ON BREAK. IT'S GOOO TO GO TO A QUIET TOWN, NOT THINK ABOUT THE PIANO, ANO RECHARGE.

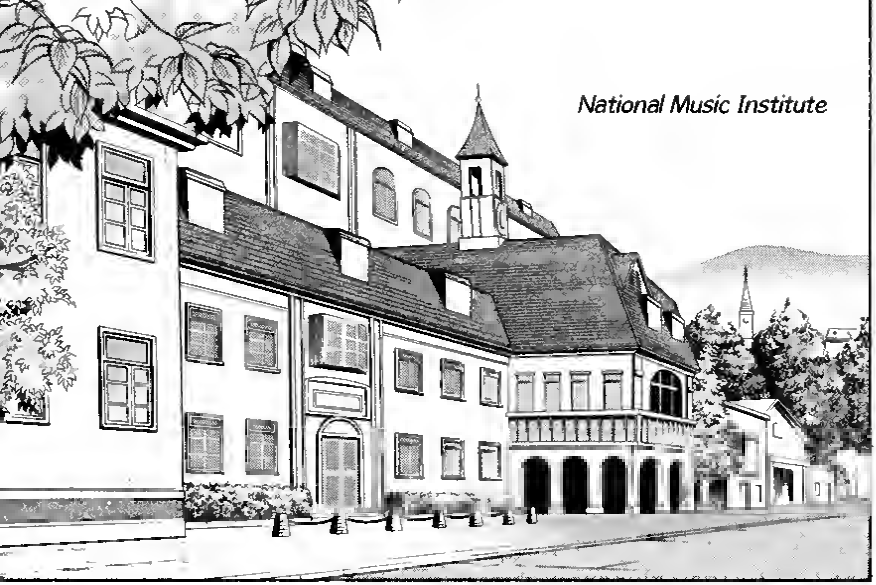

BUT IT'S NOT LIKE I'M NEUROTIC.
I'M IN A SLUMP.


YOUR TEACHER TOLD ME OF HER GREAT REMORSE FOR SHOWING YOU THAT VIDEO
AH...
YEAH

HUH?
YOU TALKED WITH MRS ENGEL-HART, RIGHT?

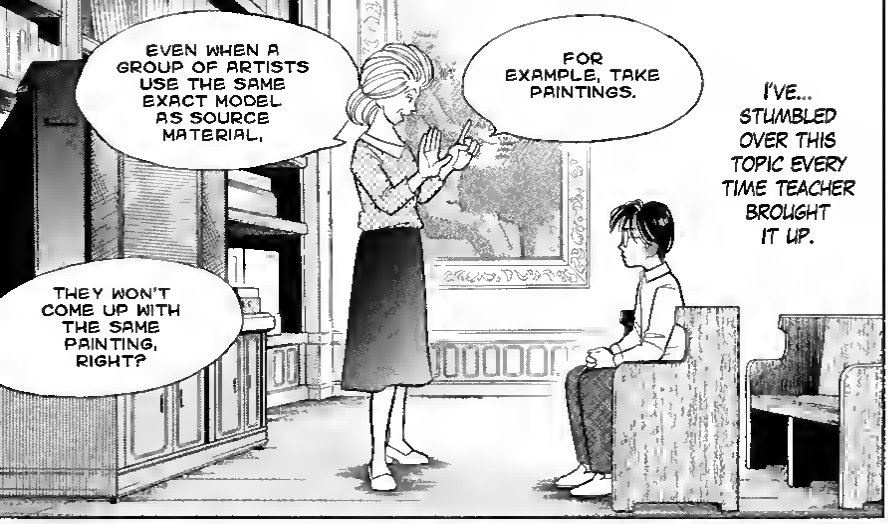

YEAH.


Salzburg

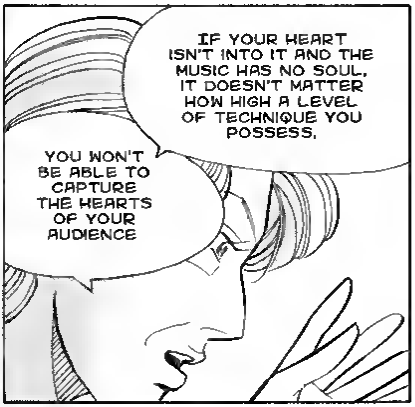

National Music Institute

THAT VIDEO... WAS SHOWN TO ME BY MY INSTRUCTOR, MRS. ENGELHART, TO HELP ME PROGRESS AS A PIANIST.

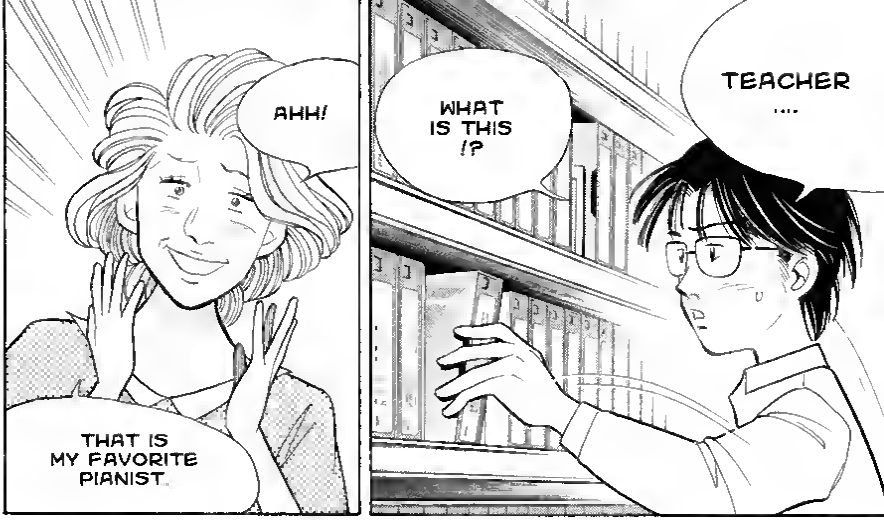
JUST LIKE EVERY PIANIST VARIES FROM PERSON TO PERSON, THEIR PLAYING STYLE ALSO VARIES.
SO, SYUHEI, DO YOU UNDERSTAND?
ALL PIANISTS HAVE PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS.
EACH AND EVERY ONE HAS ITS OWN UNIQUE STRENGTH AND BEAUTY.
THAT IS WHAT ART IS.
THERE ARE AS MANY VARIETIES OF STYLES, AS THERE ARE PIANISTS.
SO THERE IS NO "CORRECT" WAY TO PLAY.
MY PIANO HAS NO STYLE... IT HAS NO FLAIR.
I KNOW THAT, TEACHER.


I'VE... STUMBLED OVER THIS TOPIC EVERY TIME TEACHER BROUGHT IT UP.
FOR EXAMPLE, TAKE PAINTINGS.
EVEN WHEN A GROUP OF ARTISTS USE THE SAME EXACT MODEL AS SOURCE MATERIAL,
THEY WON'T COME UP WITH THE SAME PAINTING, RIGHT?

I'VE TRIED TO SCALE THIS W..LL COUNTLESS TIMES.
EVEN IF I KNOW THE ME..NING OF YOUR WORDS, I STILL DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO.


IF YOUR HEART ISN'T INTO IT AND THE MUSIC HAS NO SOUL, IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW HIGH A LEVEL OF TECHNIQUE YOU POSSESS,
YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO CAPTURE THE HEARTS OF YOUR AUDIENCE

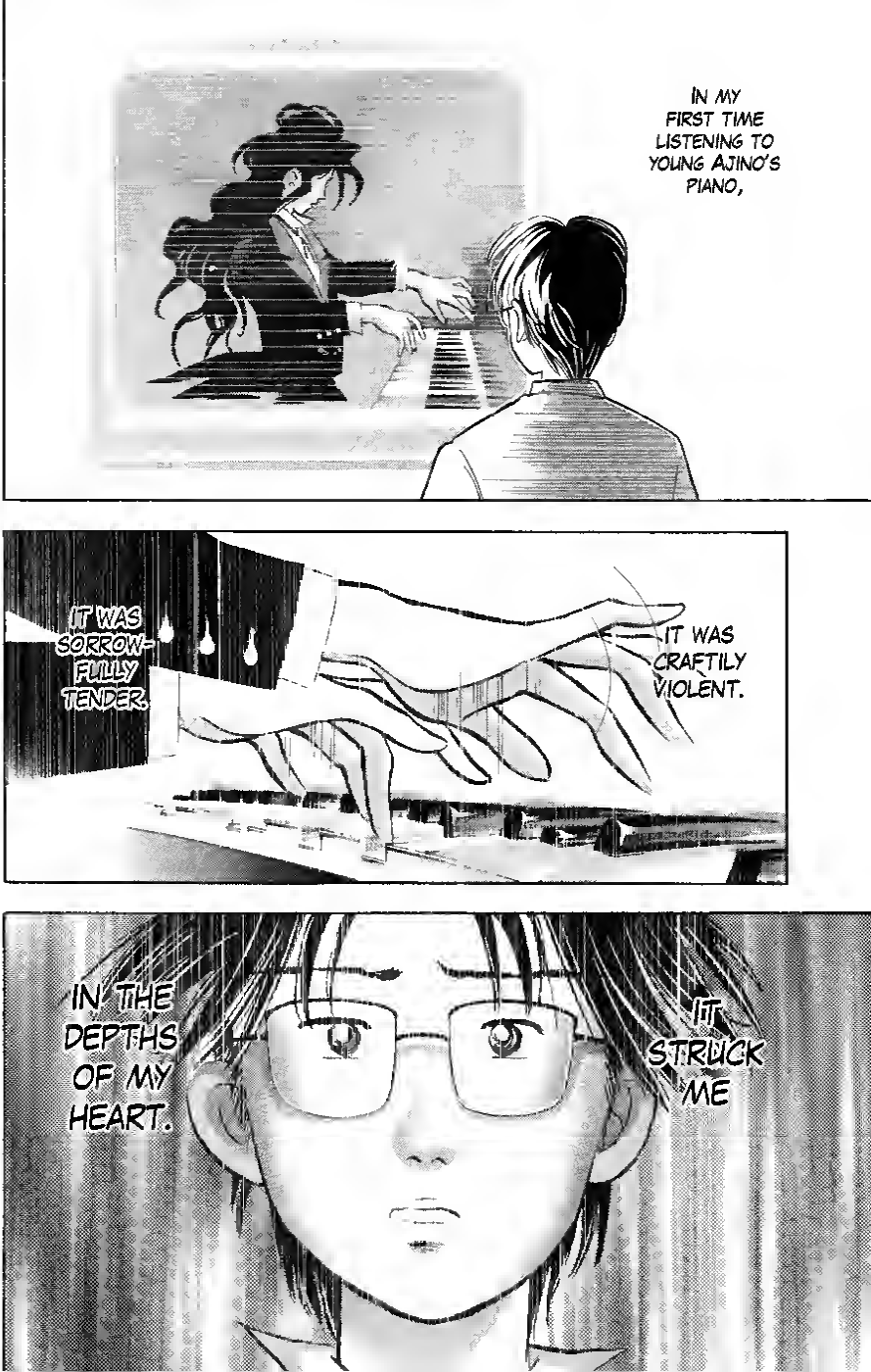
WHAT DOES IT MEAN "TO PUT YOUR HEART IN IT?"
I'M STUCK.


AHH!
THAT IS MY FAVORITE PIANIST.
WHAT IS THIS !?
TEACHER ....

HE'S THE MAN THAT WIPED AWAY EVERY PREJUDICE I HAD TOWARDS THE IDEA OF AN ASIAN PIANIST, WITH HIS AMAZING PER-FORMANCES
HE'S JAPANESE!

AJINO...
5:AJINO
...

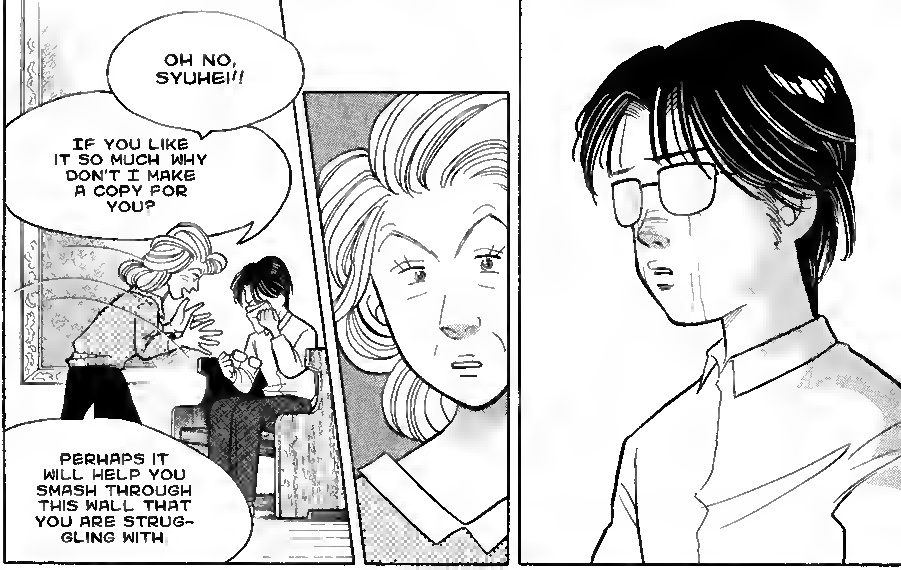
HE WAS AN AMAZING ARTIST, BUT SINCE HIS TIME AS A PIANIST WAS SO SHORT, THERE AREN'T MANY PEOPLE THAT KNOW OF HIM.
I'M SO HAPPY.
HUH? SYUHEI, YOU KNOW AJINO SOUSUKE?
THAT'S WHY IT IS SUCH A PRECIOUS VIDEO TO ME
RIGHT AFTER THIS WAS RECORDED, HE SUFFERED AN UNFORTUNATE ACCIDENT.


IN MY FIRST TIME LISTENING TO YOUNG AJINO'S PIANO,
IT WAS SORROWFULLY TENDER.
IT WAS CRAFTILY VIOLENT.
IN THE DEPTHS OF MY HEART.
IT STRUCK ME

COMPLETELY,
AND INSTANTLY,

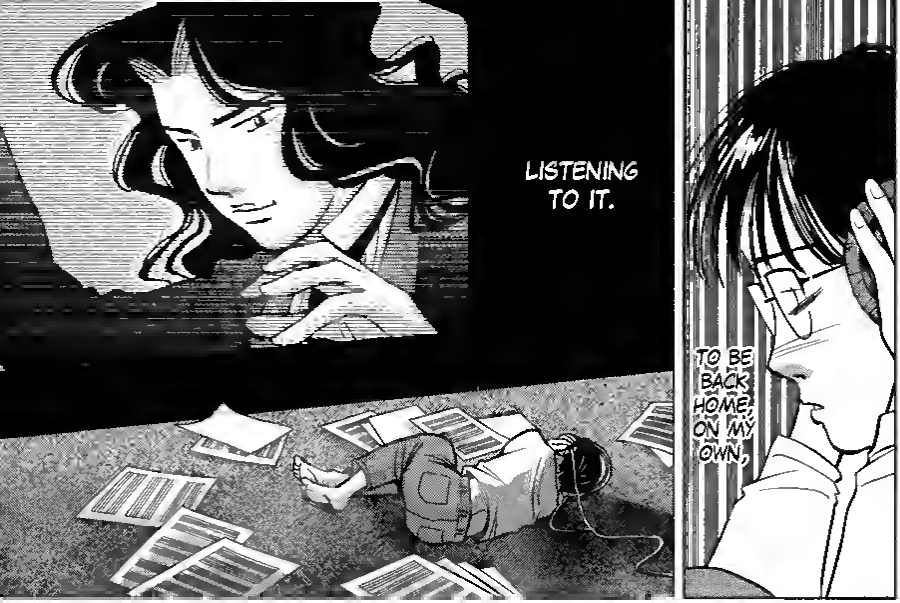
CAPTURED MY SOUL.

JAPAN TRULY LOST A WONDERFUL TREASURE.
I'M SURE THERE ARE STILL FANS OF HIS OUT THERE, SILENTLY APPRECIATING HIS PIANO EVEN NOW.

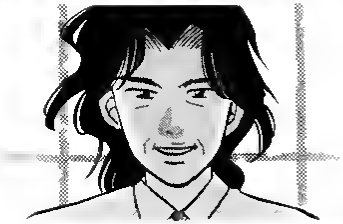

OH NO, SYUHEI!!
IF YOU LIKE IT SO MUCH WHY DON'T I MAKE A COPY FOR YOU?
PERHAPS IT WILL HELP YOU SMASH THROUGH THIS WALL THAT YOU ARE STRUGGLING WITH

I WATCHED THE VIDEO OVER AND OVER AGAIN
WHENEVER I HAD THE TIME,

WHEN I WAS AT SCHOOL OR AT A FRIEND'S HOUSE... I ACHED
LOSING MYSELF IN ASTNO SOUSUKE'S PIANO

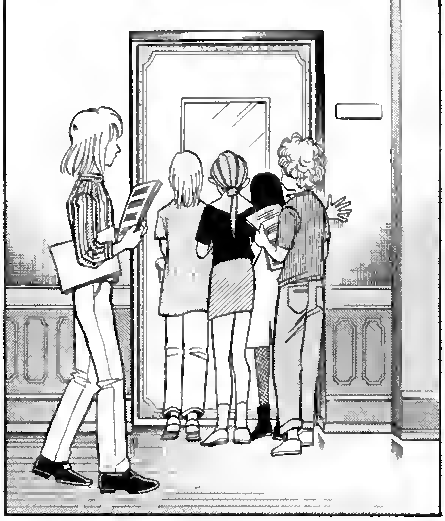


"IF YOU DO THAT, YOU'LL REALIZE THAT THERE IS NO NEED TO COMPARE YOURSELF TO ANYBODY ELSE."

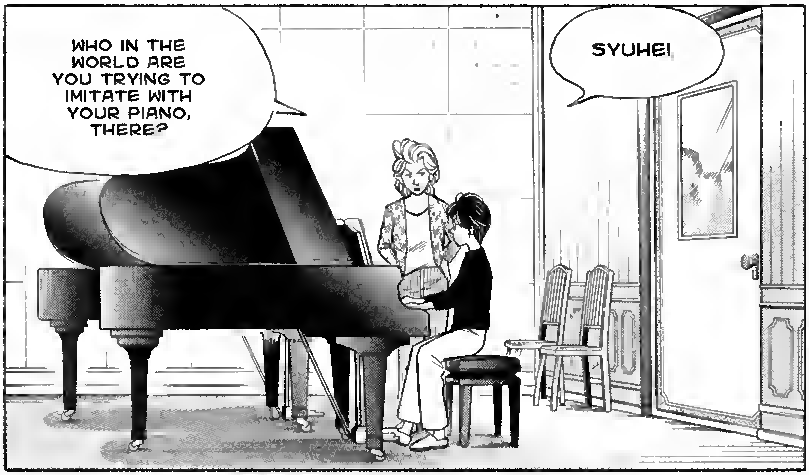


"YOU SHOULD LOVE YOUR OWN WAY OF PLAYING THE PIANO MORE..."

IT'S ALREADY BEEN FIVE YEARS,
BUT I STILL HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO LOVE MY OWN WAY OF PLAYING THE PIANO.

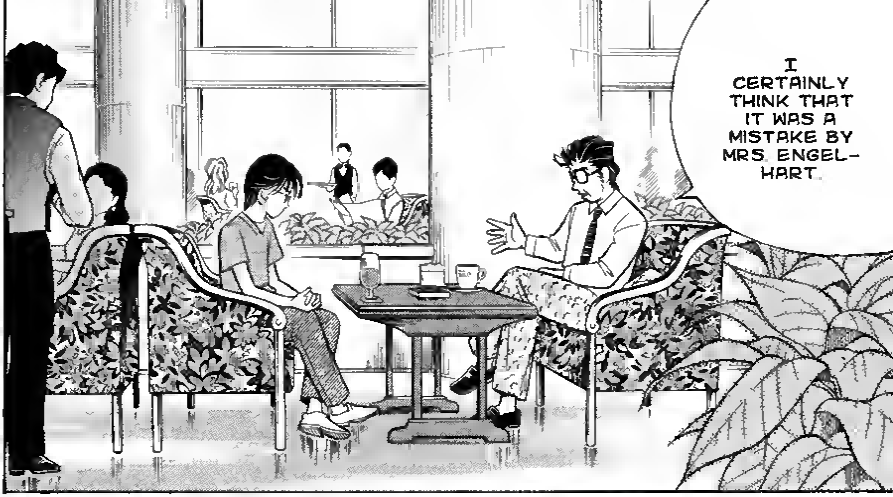


THAT'S ENOUGH!

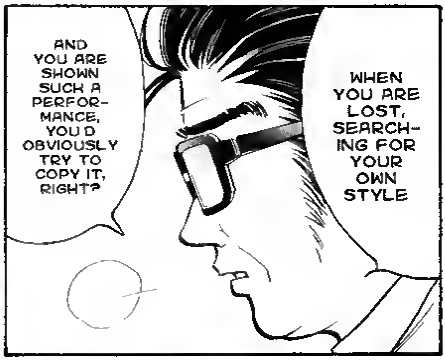

WHO IN THE WORLD ARE YOU TRYING TO IMITATE WITH YOUR PIANO, THERE?
SYUHEI

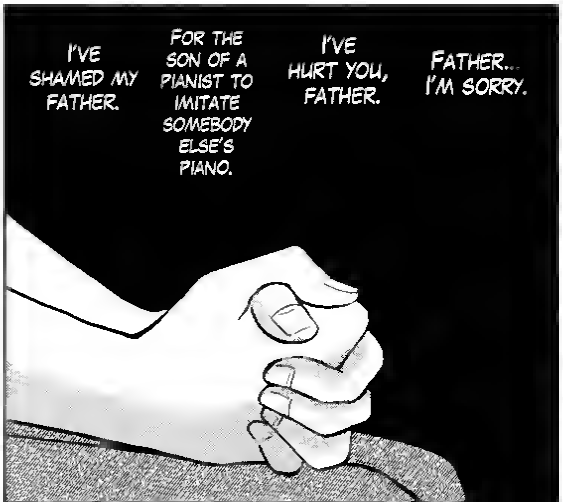
TO BE ABLE TO LOVE MY OWN PLAYING STYLE.
I'M JUST TRYING TO PURSUE A SOUND THAT I LOVE.

AHH, SO STUPID. THAT'S THE ONE THING TEACHER CANNOT STAND AT ALL...
SYUHEI... WAS SELECTED TO PERFORM AT THE SCHEDULED CONCERT RECITAL.
TO THINK THAT SUCH A PRODIGY WOULD BLUNDER LIKE THIS
IF I IMITATE IT AND THEN MAKE IT MY OWN, WON'T THAT BE MY PIANO, THEN!?
NO MATTER HOW GOOO THE PERSON YOU ARE IMITATING IS, IT STILL WON'T BE YOUR PIANO
SYUHEI.
カチ!!
IT WAS A MISTAKE FOR ME TO SHOW YOU THAT VIDEO

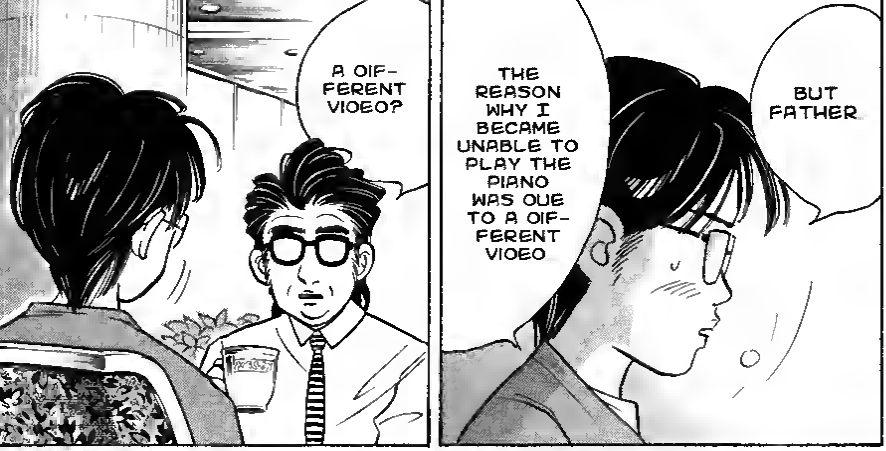

I CERTAINLY THINK THAT IT WAS A MISTAKE BY MRS. ENGEL-HART.

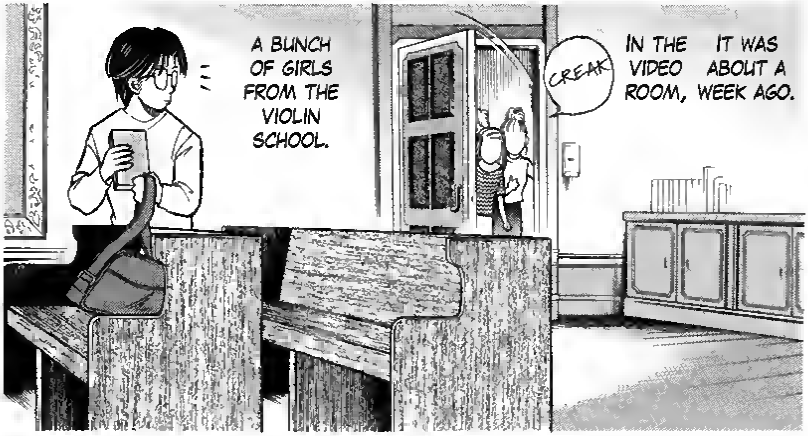
ON TOP OF THAT, IT WAS AJINO SOUSUKE'S PIANO.


AND YOU ARE SHOWN SUCH A PERFOR-MANCE, YOU'D OBVIOUSLY TRY TO COPY IT, RIGHT?
WHEN YOU ARE LOST, SEARCH-ING FOR YOUR OWN STYLE


I'VE SHAMED MY FATHER.
FOR THE SON OF A PIANIST TO IMITATE SOMEBODY ELSE'S PIANO.
I'VE HURT YOU, FATHER.
FATHER... I'M SORRY.

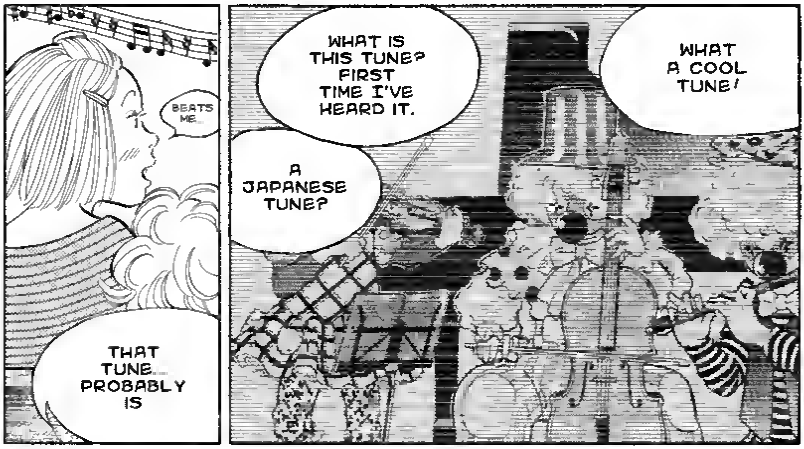
...

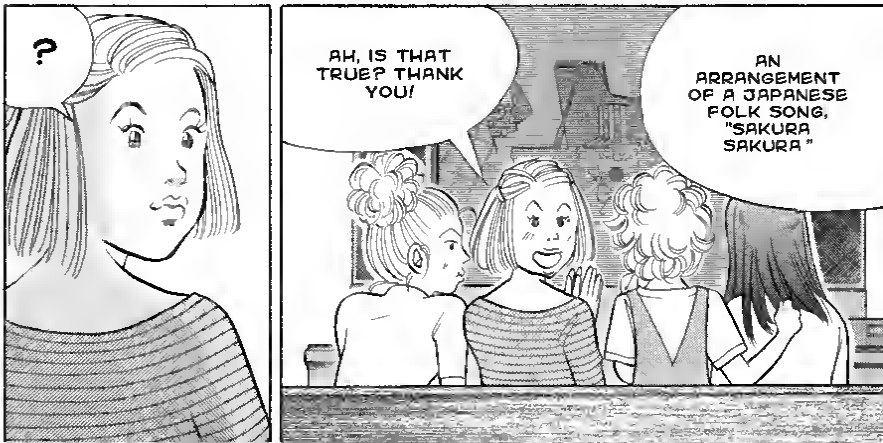

A DIF-FERENT VIDEO?
THE REASON WHY I BECAME UNABLE TO PLAY THE PIANO WAS DUE TO A DIF-FERENT VIDEO
BUT FATHER


A BUNCH OF GIRLS FROM THE VIOLIN SCHOOL.
CREAK
IN THE VIDEO ROOM, IT WAS ABOUT A WEEK AGO.

yay
SURE, I'M JUST ABOUT TO LEAVE
UMM... MAY WE USE THE VCR?

AND A TROUPE OF CLOWNS WERE GIVING AN OPEN AIR PERFORMANCE OUT ON THE STREET.
THAT'S SO CUTE!! ♡
IN THE VIDEO, ONE OF THE GIRLS IN THE GROUP WAS ON A TRIP TO JAPAN,


BEATS ME.
THAT TUNE... PROBABLY IS
A JAPANESE TUNE?
WHAT IS THIS TUNE? FIRST TIME I'VE HEARD IT.
WHAT A COOL TUNE!


?
AH, IS THAT TRUE? THANK YOU!
AN ARRANGEMENT OF A JAPANESE FOLK SONG, "SAKURA SAKURA"

KAI!!

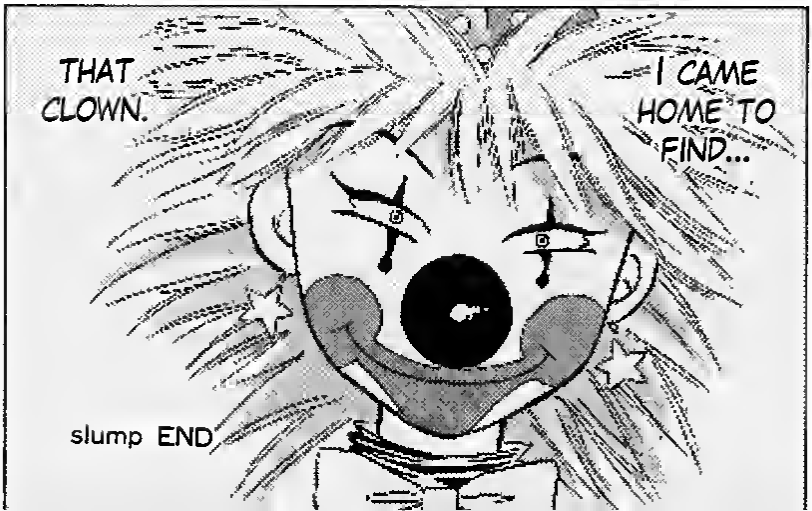
IT'S KAI!
NO DOUBT ABOUT IT! EVEN IF I CAN'T MAKE OUT HIS FACE, THIS PIANO—!
THIS PIANO HAS TO BE KAI!!

MY FINGERS HAVEN'T MOVED LIKE I WANTED THEM TO MOVE.
EVER SINCE THEN, MY FINGERS

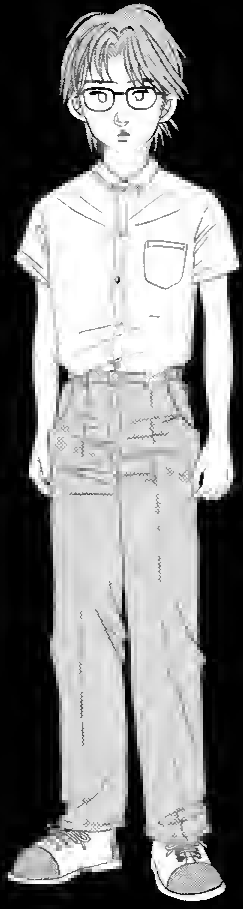
EVER SINCE THEN

I DIDN'T RETURN HOME TO JAPAN TO REST.
FATHER

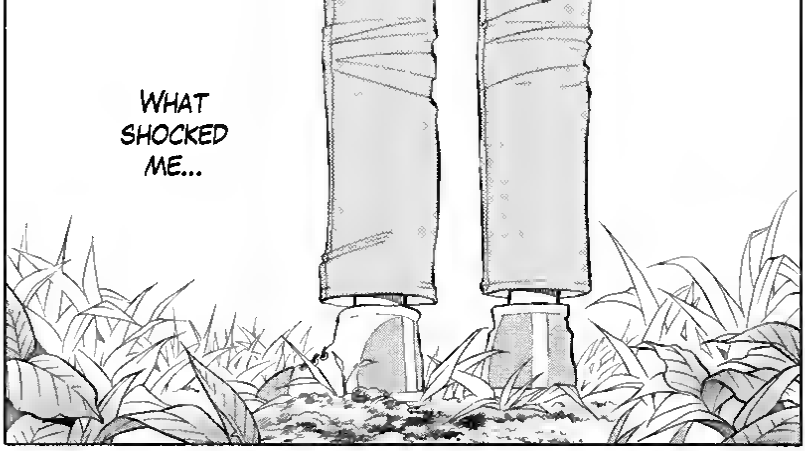
WH-
WHAT IS HE SAYING !?


THAT CLOWN.
I CAME HOME TO FIND...
slump END

piano no mori
chapter 60
p n y x t r
barbapapa
Unproductive



Chapter 60 Traces of Kai 1

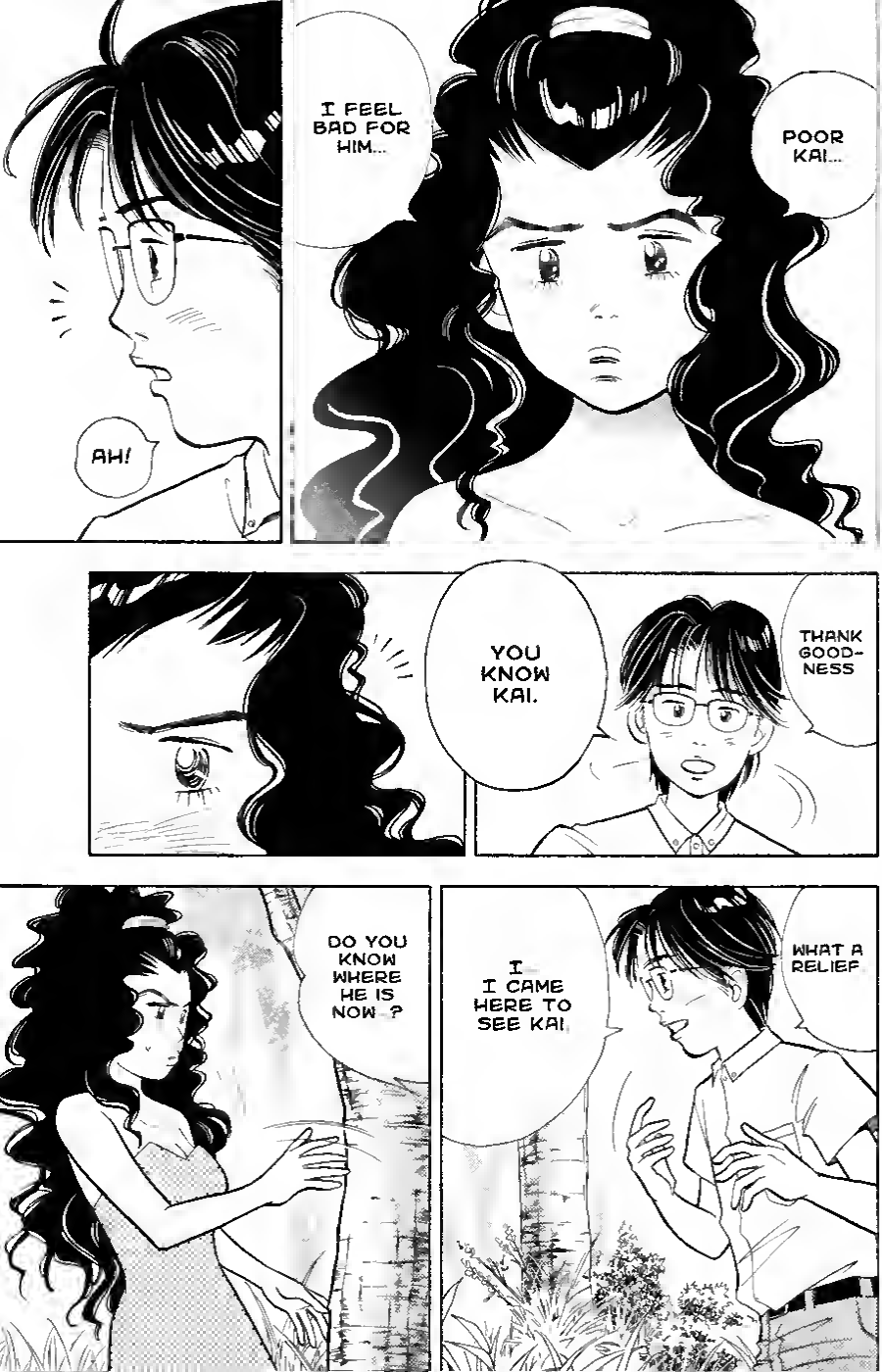

WHAT SHOCKED ME...

WAS THAT THE "PIANO OF THE FOREST" WAS NO LONGER THERE.

THE PI-
PIANO IS GONE

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR THE PIANO, IT'S BEEN GONE FOR A LONG TIME, NOW.
!

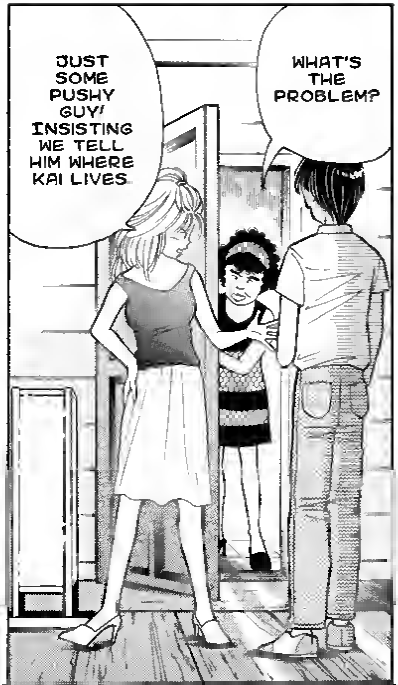
YOU CAN TELL JUST BY LOOKING AT THAT TREE.
AH...
IT GOT HIT BY THE LIGHTNING AND BURNED UP
OH...


I FEEL BAD FOR HIM...
POOR KAI...
AH!
YOU KNOW KAI.
THANK GOOD-NESS
DO YOU KNOW WHERE HE IS NOW ?
I... I CAME HERE TO SEE KAI
WHAT A RELIEF

I DON'T KNOW!
I
WHERE MIGHT I BE ABLE TO MEET HIM?
UH...
...?

WE DON'T KNOW WHAT WE DON'T KNOW.
IT'LL BE THE SAME ANSWER NO MATTER WHO YOU ASK!

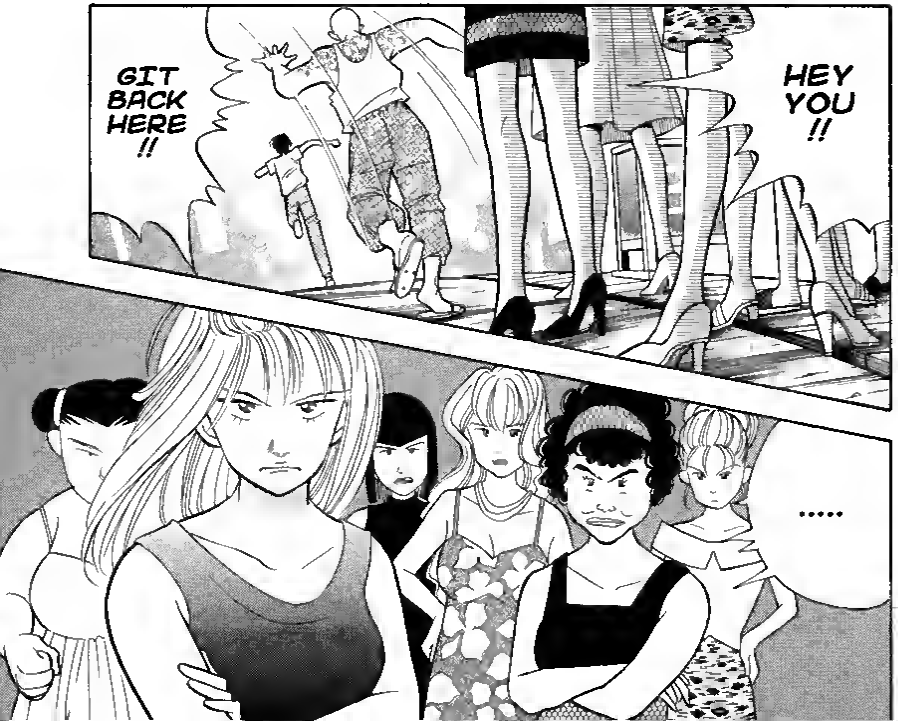
HMMMM

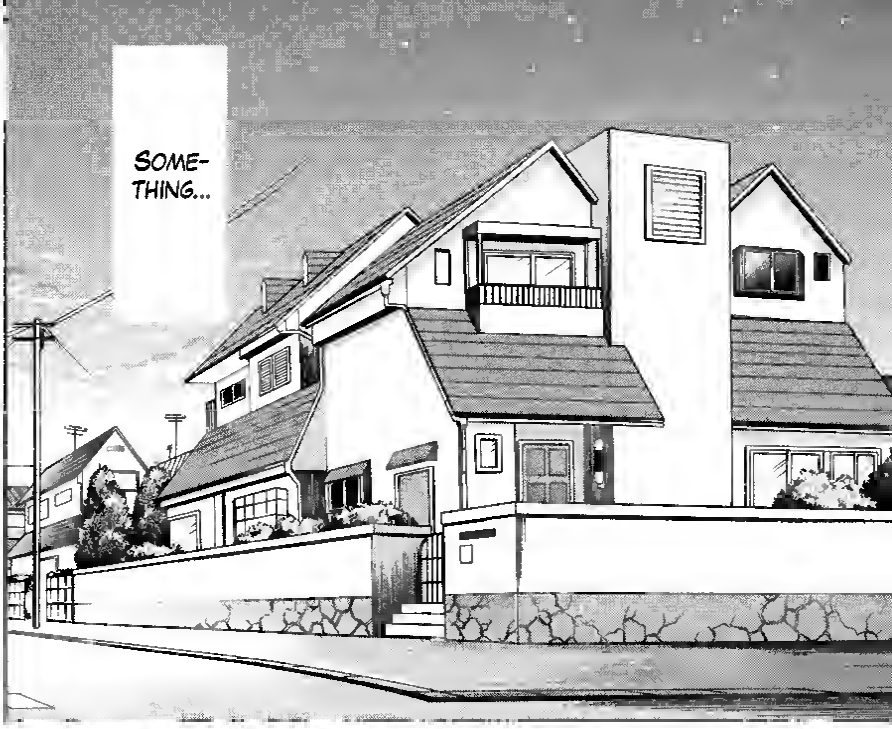

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?
JUST SOME PUSHY GUY! INSISTING WE TELL HIM WHERE KAI LIVES.

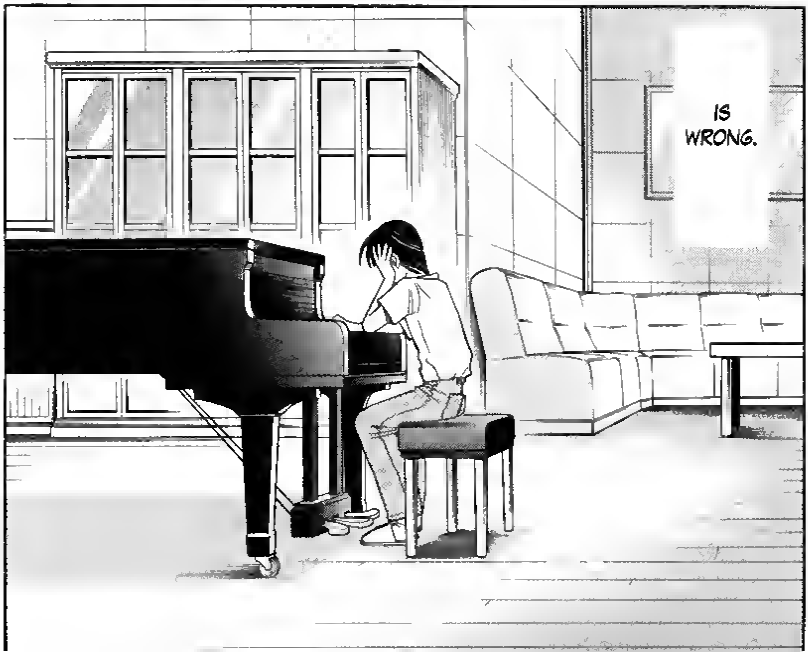
FORGET THAT! HOW'S ABOUT YOU COME HAVE SOME FUN WITH ME?
YOU'RE CUTE AND JUST MY TYPE.

IF KAI ISN'T AROUND... THEN HOW ABOUT HIS MOM.
HUH?
HIS MOM ...?
IF THIS IS YOUR FIRST TIME, I'LL GIVE A 50% DISCOUNT! ♡
I- I APPRECIATE THE IDEA, BUT NO, THANKS.
HEY! COME HERE, YOU!
HUH?
HER NAME IS REIKO.
SHE SHOULD BE HERE
WHAT KIND OF INFORMATION ARE YOU AFTER?
WHY ARE YOU POKING AROUND HERE?

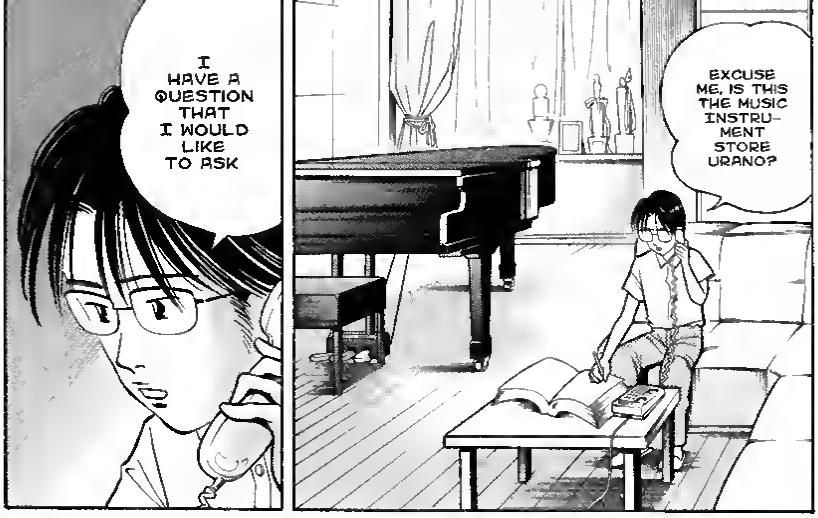
ALL I AM HERE FOR,
IS TO SEE KAI
HEY EVERY-BODY! COME OUT HERE!!
THERE'S A STRANGE GUY OUT HERE LOOKING FOR TROUBLE !!!
HOW CAN I CONVINCE YOU THAT I'M TELLING YOU THE TRUTH!?


HEY YOU !!
GIT BACK HERE !!
.....

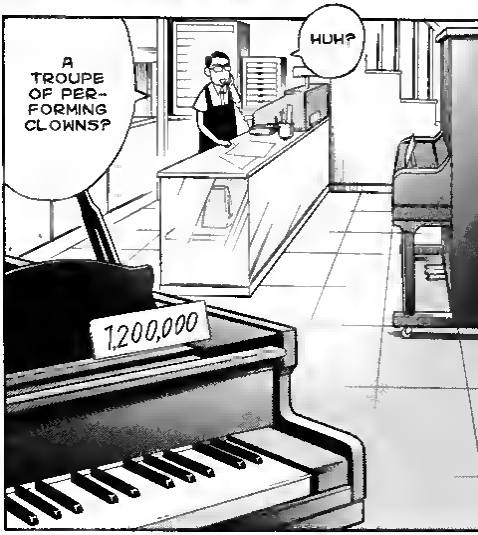

SOME-
THING...


IS
WRONG.

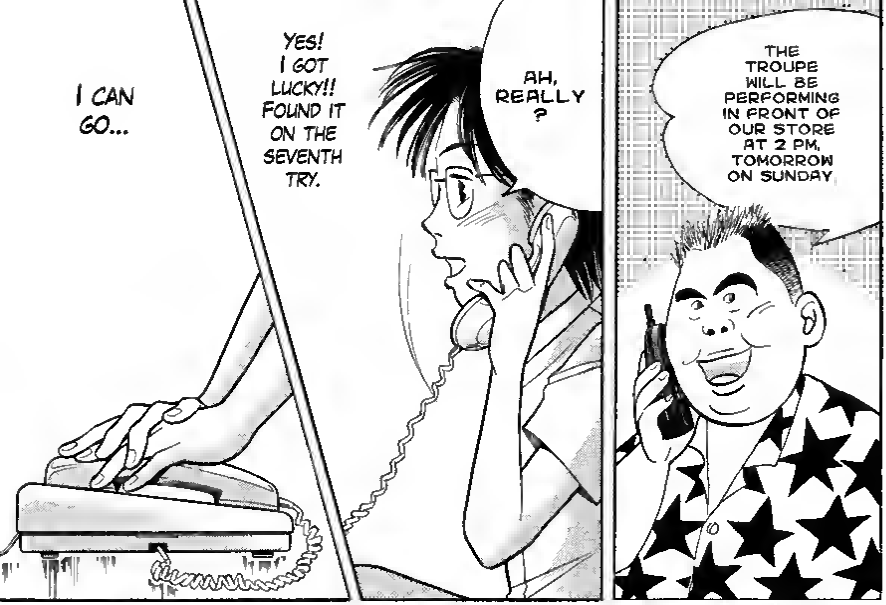
WHAT CAN I DO NOW.
HOW DID I END UP IN THAT MESS!?
ALL I WANTED WAS TO SEE KAI.
I COULD TRY THAT.
AH...
ベ ベ ラ ラ
楽器店
IN THE BACKGROUND OF THE VIDEO, THERE WAS A GLIMPSE OF A MUSIC INSTRUMENT STORE.


I HAVE A QUESTION THAT I WOULD LIKE TO ASK
EXCUSE ME, IS THIS THE MUSIC INSTRU-MENT STORE URANO?

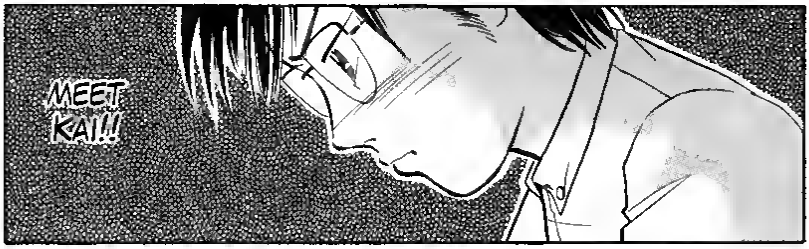
AHAHA, YES THAT WOULD BE US.
カワヤ楽器店
TEL 08
ガラガラ

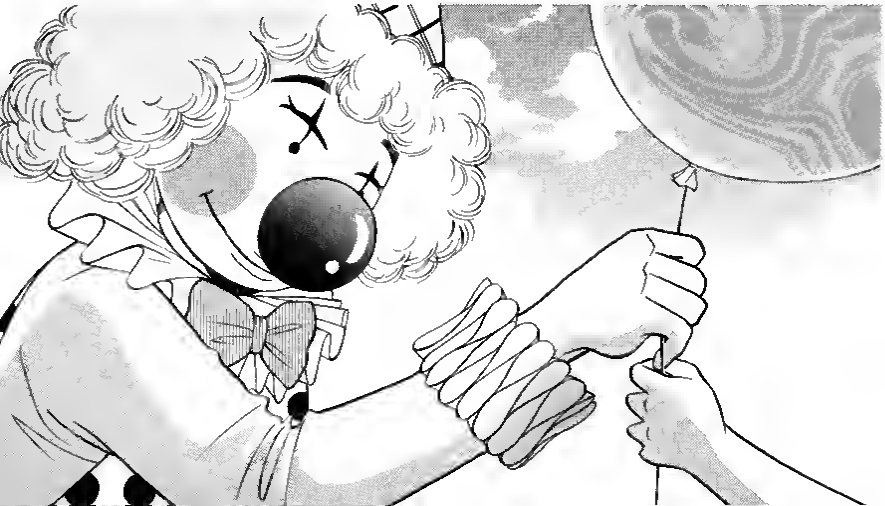

A TROUPE OF PER-FORMING CLOWNS?
HUH?
1,200,000

BUT I DO KNOW OF THE STORE THAT WORKS WITH THEM.
AHH, THAT'S NOT US,


I CAN GO...
YES! I GOT LUCKY!! FOUND IT ON THE SEVENTH TRY.
AH, REALLY ?
THE TROUPE WILL BE PERFORMING IN FRONT OF OUR STORE AT 2 PM, TOMORROW ON SUNDAY

* The number seven is a lucky number in Japan

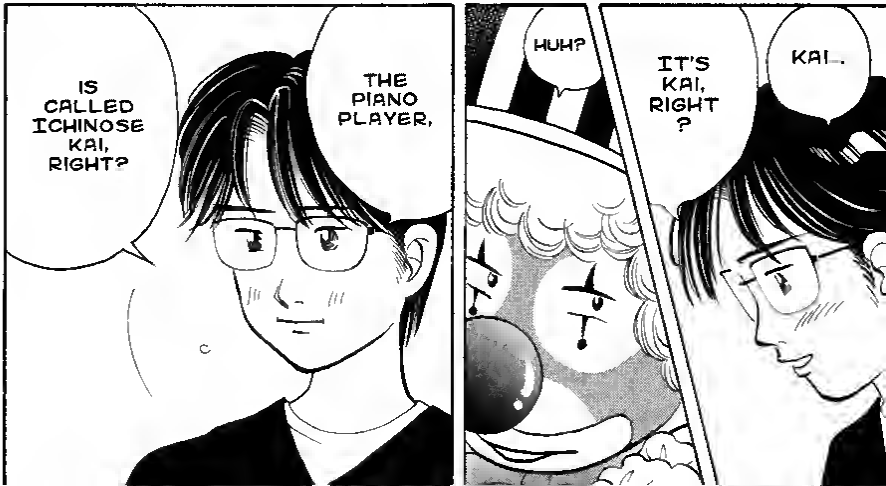


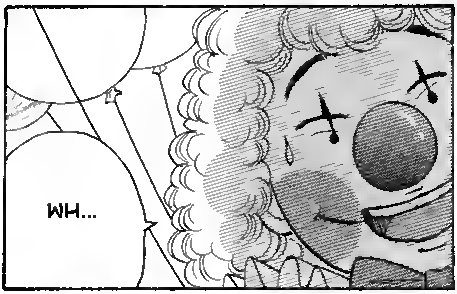


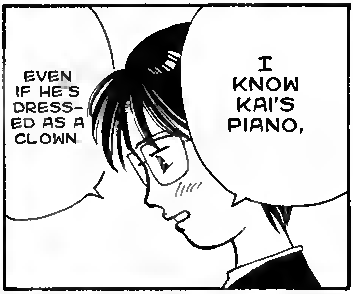
WHY...
PIANO!?
IS THERE NO...

AHHH, WHENEVER HE'S ARDUND, IT'S PACKED!!
THAT'S RIGHT!
IS THE PIANO PLAYER NOT HERE, TODAY?
UMM...

HE'S GOT SO MANY FANS, THAT WHEN HE'S NOT HERE THEY BOTHER US ABOUT IT. THERE ARE MANY PIECES WE JUST CAN'T PLAY WITHOUT HIM
DID YOU COME HERE TO HEAR HIS PIANO, TOO?

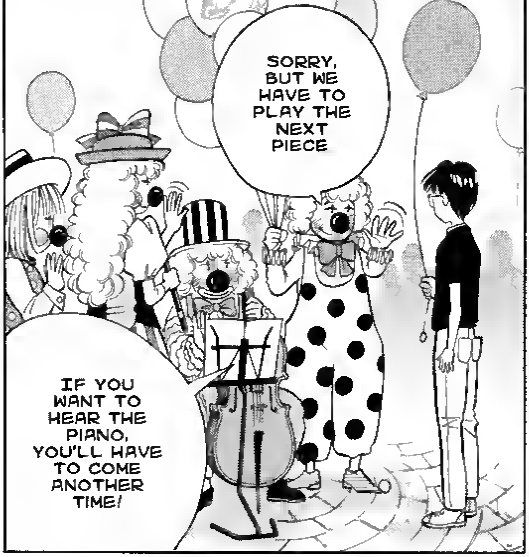

IS CALLED ICHINOSE KAI, RIGHT?
THE PIANO PLAYER,
HUH?
IT'S KAI, RIGHT ?
KAI...


WH...

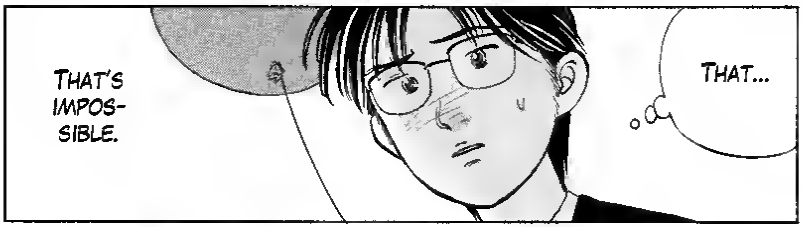

I KNOW KAI'S PIANO,
EVEN IF HE'S DRESS-ED AS A CLOWN

HUH?
BUT THAT PIANO

THE PERSON PLAYING THE PIANO DOESN'T GO BY THAT NAME!
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?


SORRY, BUT WE HAVE TO PLAY THE NEXT PIECE
IF YOU WANT TO HEAR THE PIANO, YOU'LL HAVE TO COME ANOTHER TIME!

IT'S A DIFFERENT PERSON. A DIFFERENT PERSON.


THAT'S IMPOS-SIBLE.
THAT...

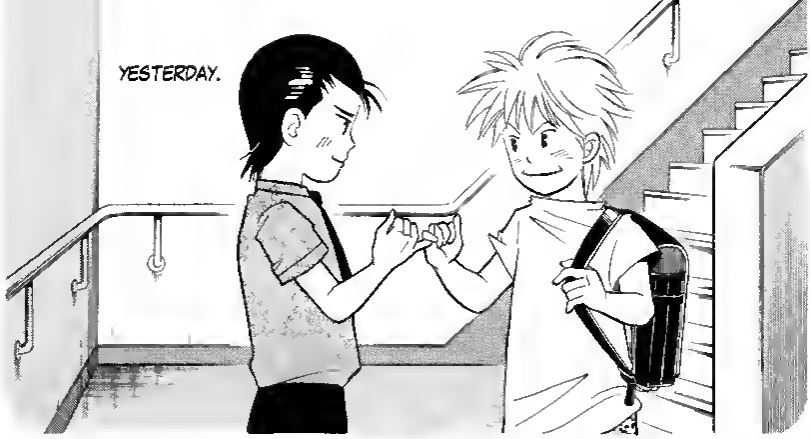
HAD TO BE KAI.
THAT PIANO...

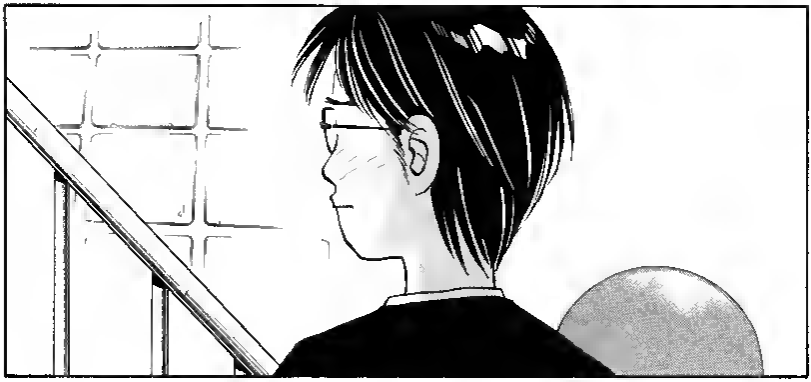
WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON!?

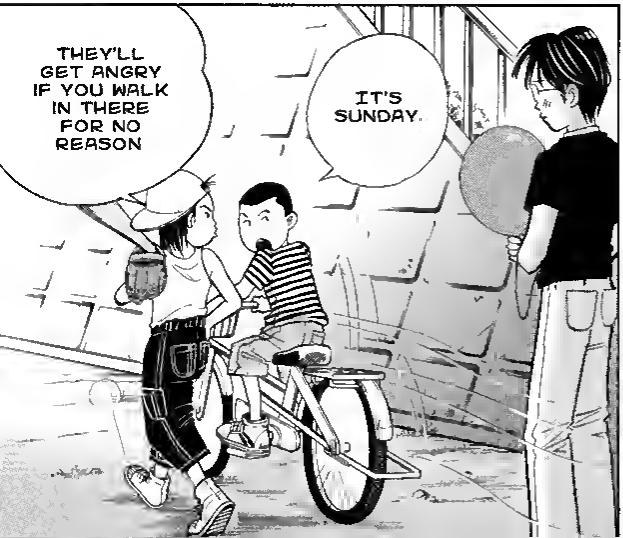
I DON'T THINK I WAS AT THIS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FOR MORE THAN THREE MONTHS,
HOW NOSTAL-GIC.

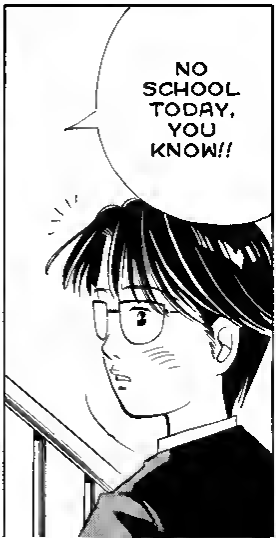
森脇小学校

EVERY-
THING SO
CLEARLY.
YET, I
REMEMBER
AS IF IT
HAPPENED
ONLY...

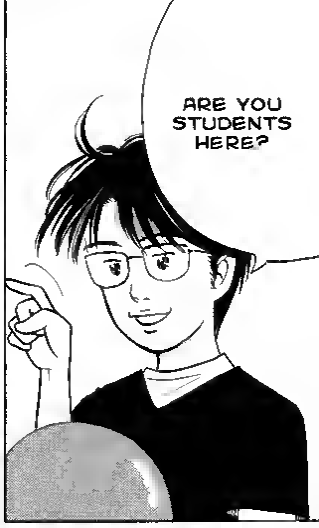

YESTERDAY.

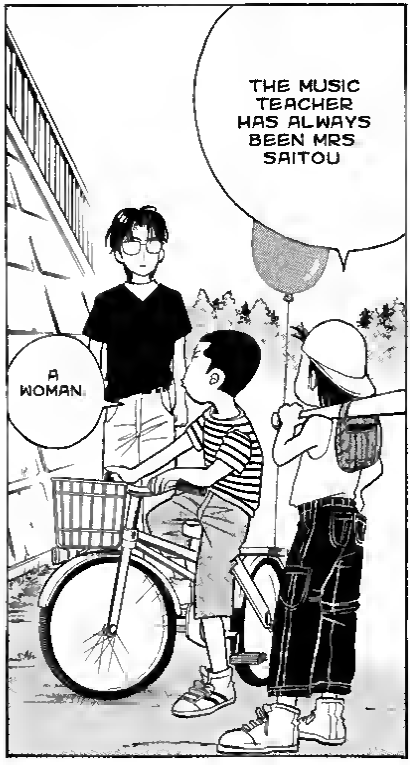


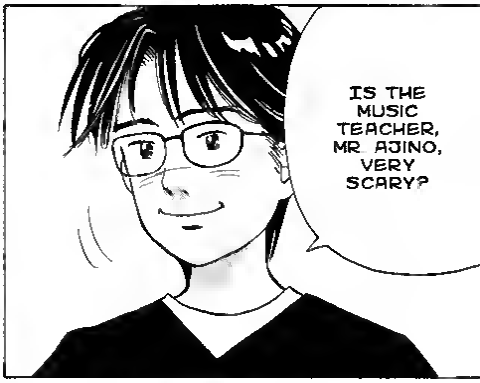

THEY'LL GET ANGRY IF YOU WALK IN THERE FOR NO REASON
IT'S SUNDAY.


NO SCHOOL TODAY, YOU KNOW!!

I'M IN FOURTH GRADE
THAT'S RIGHT.


ARE YOU STUDENTS HERE?


A WOMAN.
THE MUSIC TEACHER HAS ALWAYS BEEN MRS SAITOU


IS THE MUSIC TEACHER, MR. AJINO, VERY SCARY?

I DON'T KNOW
WHO'S THAT?

AJINO WHAT A STRANGE NAME.
A...
Got a balloon though!
AJINO ISN'T HERE EITHER.

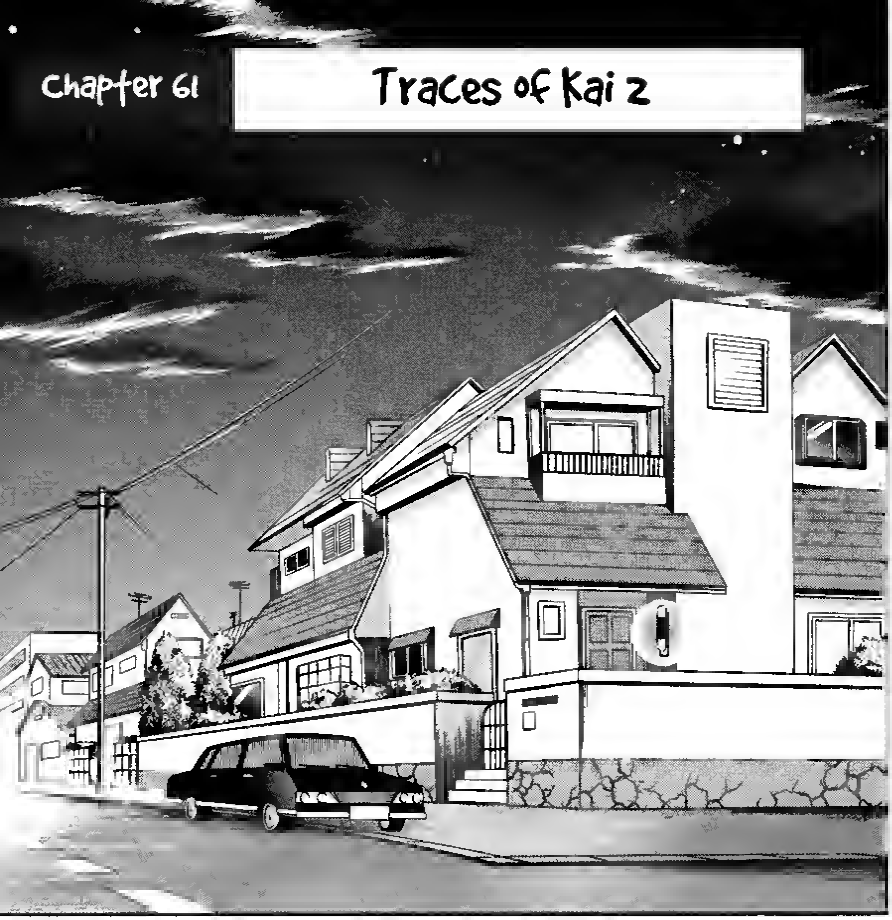
カイの行方・・・・① END

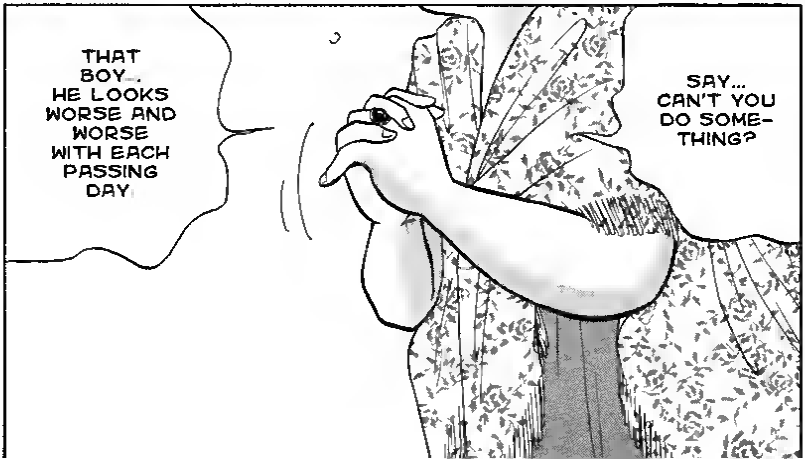
The Perfect World of KAI

piano no mori
chapter 61
p n y x t r
barbapapa
Unproductive

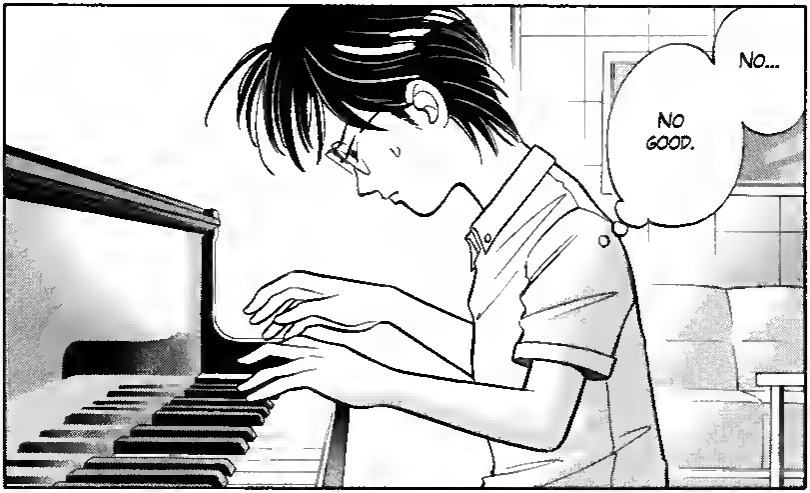
Chapter 61

Traces of Kai 2

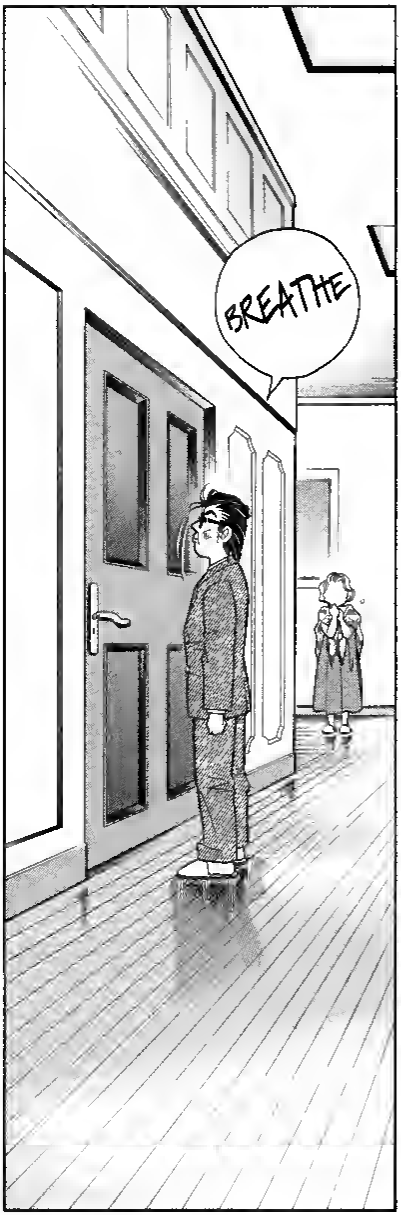




I CAN'T BEAR WATCHING HIM SO SAD, BROODING OVER HIS PROBLEMS...
EVEN SO...
HAHA...
YOUICHIRO, YOU'RE A PROFESSIONAL! ALL YOU DO IS LEAVE HIM ALONE TO AGONIZE OVER HIS TROUBLES!
SLUMPS WHEN A PIANIST CAN'T PLAY THE PIANO OCCUR QUITE OFTEN.
THE BEST METHOD IS TO JUST LEAVE HIM ALONE.
HE LOOKED SO PALE, WHEN HE GOT BACK HOME.
THEN HE LOCKED HIMSELF UP INSIDE THE PIANO ROOM.
BUT HE'S NOT PLAYING THE PIANO AT ALL, NOR IS HE COMING OUT.

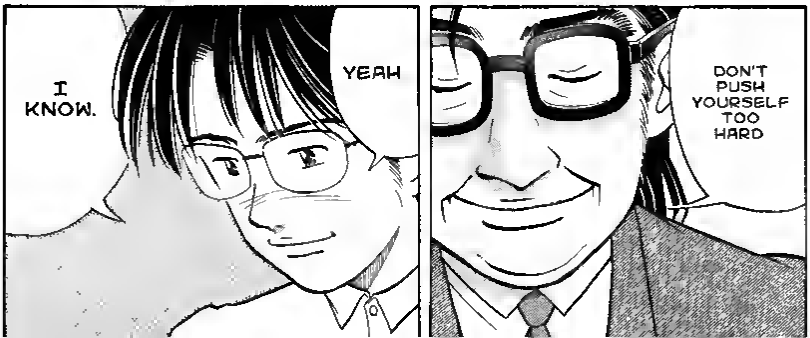

NO...
NO GOOD.

I THOUGHT I SHOULD TRY PLAYING.
BUT MY FINGERS ARE STIFF.

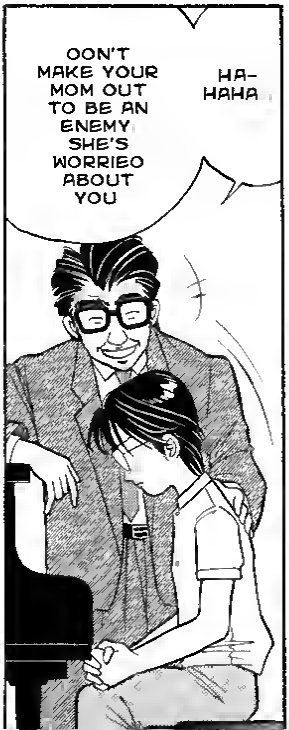

BREATHE

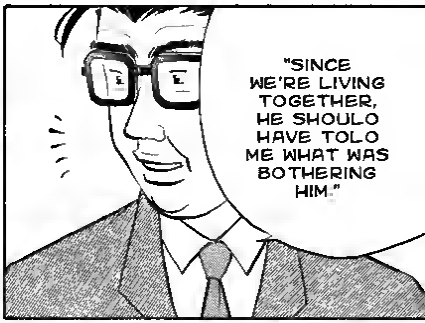
WHEN WILL THIS NIGHTMARE END!?

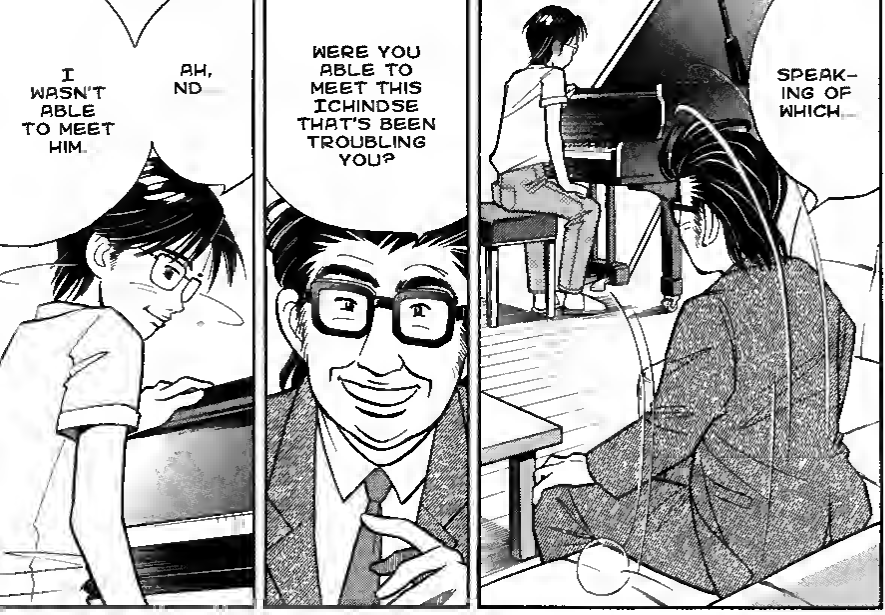
FATHER.
AH...
AHHH, SO YOU WERE IN HERE!
HOW ARE YOU FEELING ?
UMM, SO-SO... I THINK.

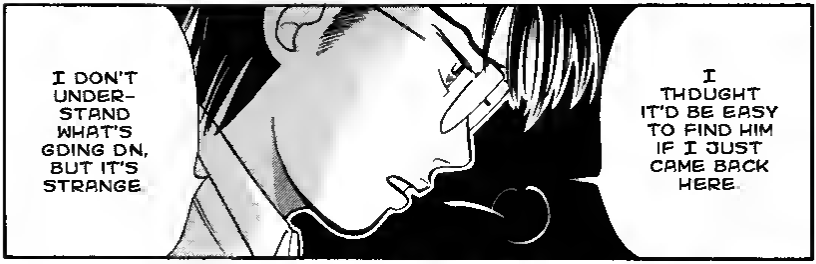

I KNOW.
YEAH
DON'T PUSH YOURSELF TOO HARD

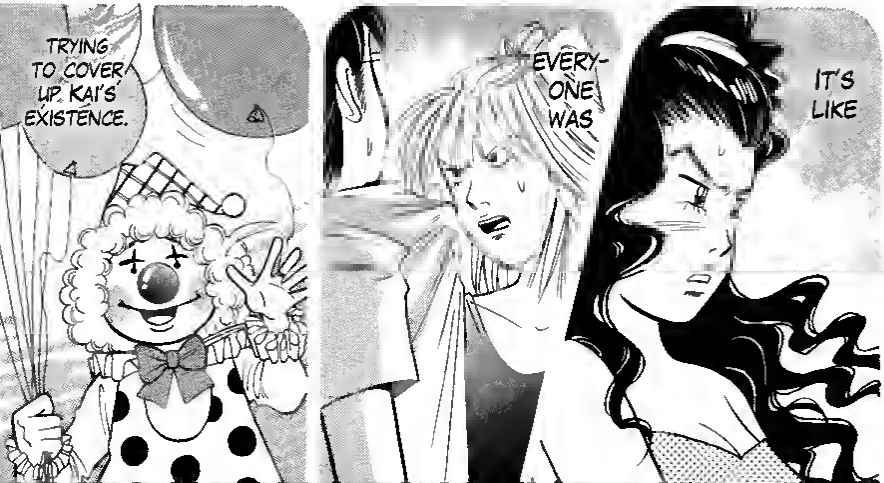
"SYUHEI LEFT FOR JAPAN ALL OF A SUDDEN," SHE SAID IN A VERY LONELY VOICE.
YOUR MOTHER WILL BE ARRIVING AT NARITA TOMORROW.
OH, RIGHT!


DON'T MAKE YOUR MOM OUT TO BE AN ENEMY. SHE'S WORRIED ABOUT YOU.
HA-HAHA


"SINCE WE'RE LIVING TOGETHER, HE SHOULD HAVE TOLD ME WHAT WAS BOTHERING HIM."

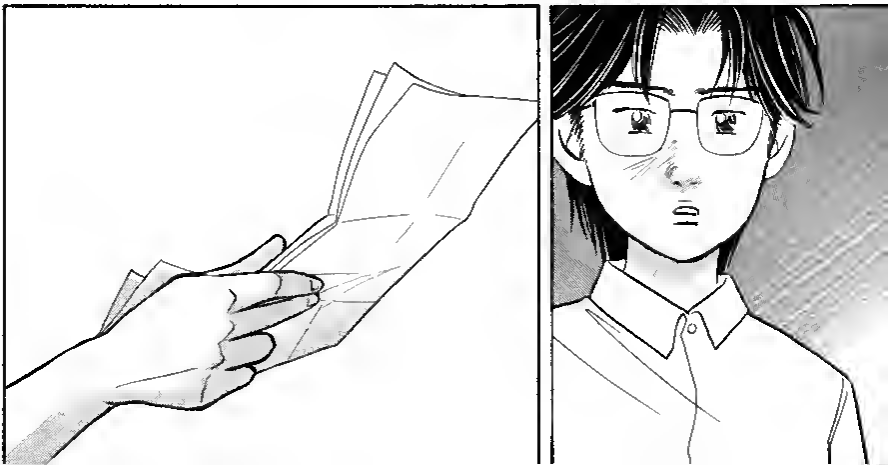

I WASN'T ABLE TO MEET HIM.
AH, ND
WERE YOU ABLE TO MEET THIS ICHINDSE THAT'S BEEN TROUBLING YOU?
SPEAK-ING OF WHICH...


I DON'T UNDER-STAND WHAT'S GDING DN, BUT IT'S STRANGE.
I THDUGHT IT'D BE EASY TO FIND HIM IF I JUST CAME BACK HERE.


TRYING TO COVER UP KAI'S EXISTENCE.
EVERY-ONE WAS
IT'S LIKE

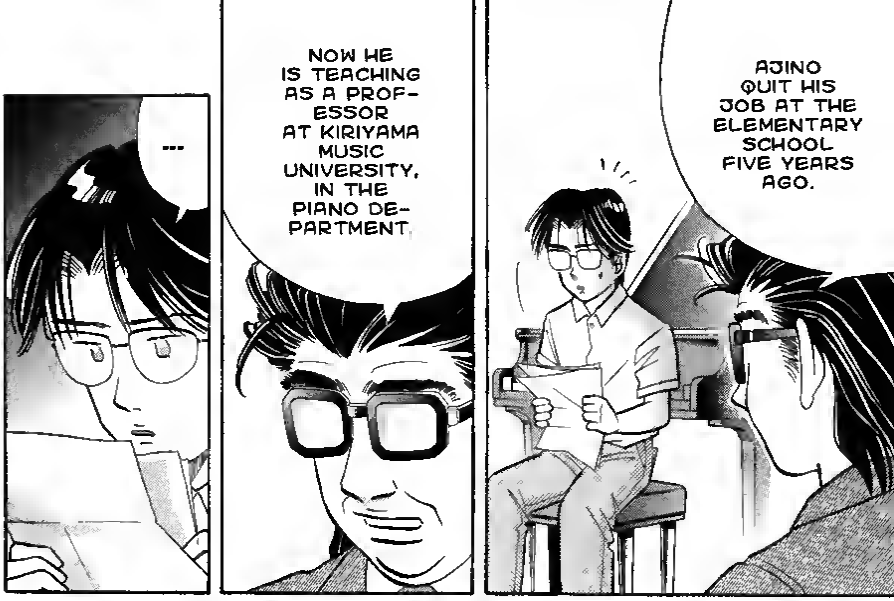
ガサゴソ
IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN NOSY OF ME,
SO YOU HAD THE DREAM ABOUT THAT CLOWN AGAIN

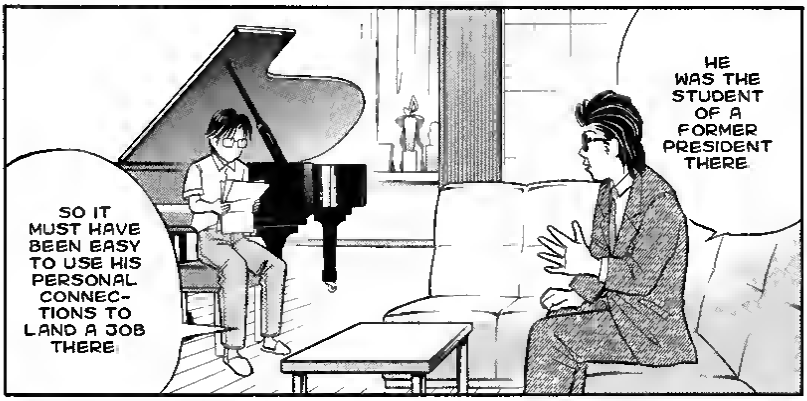
HERE'S SOME INFORMATION ABOUT KAI'S CURRENT SITUATION
BUT I HAD THEM INVESTI-GATE IT, ANYWAY



ICHINOSE KAI 16 YEARS OF AGE ATTENDING SHIGAKUIN HIGH SCHOOL IN CLASS A OF THE 2ND YEAR OF SENIOR HIGH.
THAT'S A VERY FAMOUS PREP SCHOOL AROUND HERE
...
IT APPEARS THAT HE WAS ACCEPTED AS A "SCHOLARSHIP STUDENT," AND ALL TUITIONS AND COSTS WERE WAIVED.
IT SEEMS THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF HIS UPBRINGING WAS A POINT OF CONCERN WHEN HE WAS APPLYING FOR THE SCHOOL
BUT AT ANY RATE, HE HASN'T HAD ANY PROBLEMS GETTING THE GRADES FOR THE TOP CLASS.
HIS GUARDIAN...
IS AJINO SOUSUKE.

AJINO...
YET, NEVER DID IT CROSS MY MIND THAT
I WOULD BE SEEING WHAT I AM SEEING TODAY.
IT'S ONLY NATURAL IF I THINK ABOUT IT.
MR. AJINO... IS KAI'S...
MR. AJINO... IS HIS GUARDIAN...!!!

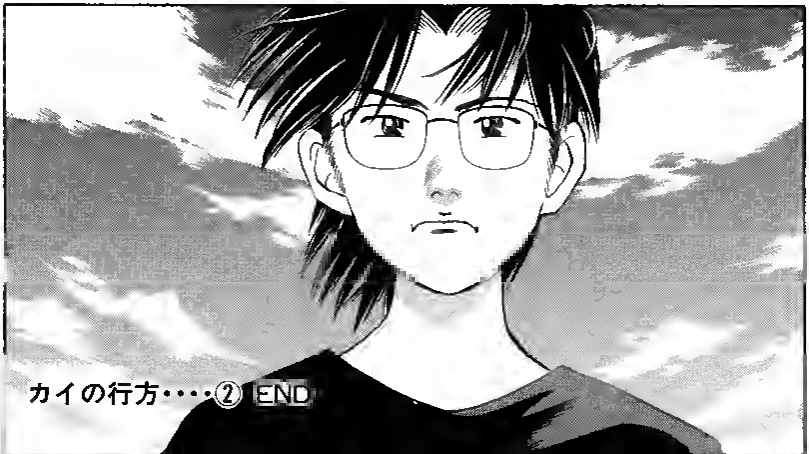

AJINO QUIT HIS JOB AT THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FIVE YEARS AGO.
NOW HE IS TEACHING AS A PROF-ESSOR AT KIRIYAMA MUSIC UNIVERSITY, IN THE PIANO DE-PARTMENT.
...


HE WAS THE STUDENT OF A FORMER PRESIDENT THERE.
SO IT MUST HAVE BEEN EASY TO USE HIS PERSONAL CONNEC-TIONS TO LAND A JOB THERE.

AMONG PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES, KIRIYAMA IS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE PACK.
BUT AS A PROFESSOR THERE, HE'LL BE MORE EFFECTIVE IN HELPING KAI AS A GUARDIAN OR AN INSTRUC-TOR, THAN AS AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER.

* Shigakuin High School

IT SURE SUCKS TO BE YOUR RIVAL!!


カイの行方・・・・② END

piano no mori
chapter 62
p n y x t r
barbapapa
Unproductive

Chapter 62 Maria

ICHINOSE? YEAH I KNOW HIM. HE'S FAMOUS.
HUH?
AND HE'S IN MY CLASS!
THANK GOOD-NESS!
FINALLY, SOMEONE WHO KNOWS HIM!
はあ..

BUT HE'S SKIPPING OUT ON CLASS, TODAY!
OR SHOULD I SAY, HE'S SKIPPING OUT AGAIN!
AND HE'LL MOST LIKELY SKIP TOMORROW, AND THE DAY AFTER THAT, TOO.
HE SKIPS OUT ON CLASS THAT MUCH?
HE HASN'T CHANGED A BIT.

DO YOU HAPPEN TO KNOW WHERE ICHINOSE WORKS?
WAIT- WAIT A MINUTE
BYE!
WORKS ?
AT OUR SCHOOL, AS LONG AS YOUR GRADES ARE GOOD, THEY DON'T CARE WHAT YOU DO.
THE ONLY RULE... IS THAT WORKING A JOB IS ABSOLUTELY FORBIDDEN.
I DON'T THINK HE WORKS!
RATHER, I KNOW HE DOESN'T!

AH...
AND THEY'LL KICK YOU RIGHT OUT.
GET FOUND OUT,
SLICE
ALL THOSE SKIPPING OUT ON CLASS ARE AT HOME, STUDYING VIGOROUSLY ON THEIR OWN
EVEN IF THAT WASN'T THE CASE, WE WOULDN'T HAVE ANY BAD STUDENTS WHO'D SKIP OUT ON SCHOOL FOR A JOB!!
FU
!!
BUT HE SHOULD BE WORKING.

YOU DON'T SEEM TO UNDER-STAND, DO YOU!
SHIGAKUIN HERE, WOULD SCARE CRYING CHILDREN INTO SILENCE!
志学院高等学校
IF GETTING INTO THE SCHOOL WAS HARD
NOT STUDYING EVEN HARDER AFTERWARDS MEANS FAILING, AND GETTING EXPELLED
ESPE-CIALLY FOR HIM, THE SCHOLAR-SHIP STUDENT
IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN HIS KIND OF GRADES,
YOU HAVE TO WONDER HOW MUCH EFFORT HE PUTS INTO STUDYING

...
IF YOU'RE LUCKY, HE MIGHT FREE UP SOME TIME TO TALK TO YOU
WHY DON'T YOU GO CHECK OUT WHERE HE LIVES?
HE'LL DEFINITELY BE STUDY-ING

REACHED A BOILING POINT.
MY ANGER...

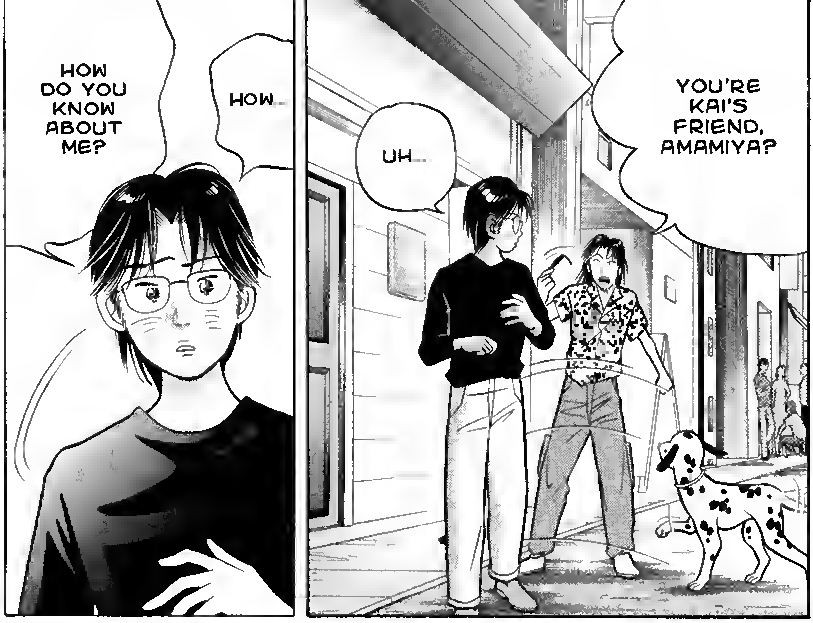
BOTH AREN'T KAI'S FAULT AT ALL.
MY FINGERS UNCONSCIOUSLY BECOMING UNABLE TO PLAY TO THE PIANO.
THE DREAMS OF THE CLOWN TORMENTING ME.
BUT A SCHOLARSHIP STUDENT AT AN ELITE HIGH SCHOOL... WITH THE FINEST INSTRUCTOR TEACHING HIM PIANO.
KNOCK KNOCK
KNOCK KNOCK

WOOF
WOOF
WOOF
WHY THE HELL ARE YOU KNOCKING ON MY OOOR?
HEY, YOU!
WOOF
WOOF
KNOCK KNOCK
KNOCK KNOCK
BAR
雀荘
KAI...
KAI!
KAI, YOU'RE HERE, RIGHT?
KNOCK KNOCK

I...
I AM HERE TO FIND ICHINOSE KAI.
HE'S NOT HERE
IS THAT SO?
THEN I'LL HAVE TO COME BACK SOME OTHER TIME.
YOU DON'T UNDER-STAND, DO YOU! DON'T COME BACK AGAIN!!!
WOOF
WOOF

SO YOU'RE THE ONE THAT'S BEEN SNOOPING AROUND RECENTLY.
I AM NOT SNOOPING AROUND.
I'M REALLY HERE JUST TO SEE KAI.
...
WOOF
WOOF

YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY. THAT DOG'S ALL BARK AND NO BITE!
...
SOME-THING WRONG WITH YOUR HANDS!?
WOOF
WOOF
WHOA!
AH, NO, FORGET ABOUT IT. IT'S JUST A BAD HABIT OF MINE.
...
AMA-MIYA?
SO ARE YOU PER-HAPS...


HOW DO YOU KNOW ABOUT ME?
HOW...
UH...
YOU'RE KAI'S FRIEND, AMAMIYA?

UH...
THE AMAMIYA WHO'S GOING TO BECOME A PIANIST, RIGHT!?
YOU'RE REALLY GREAT AT THE PIANO, RIGHT !?
I KNOW ALL ABOUT YOU!!

YOU IDIOT!! IF THAT WAS THE CASE, YOU SHOULD HAVE SAID SO SOONER !!
I'LL TAKE YOU TO MEET KAI.

It's not something to cry over!
What the hell!!

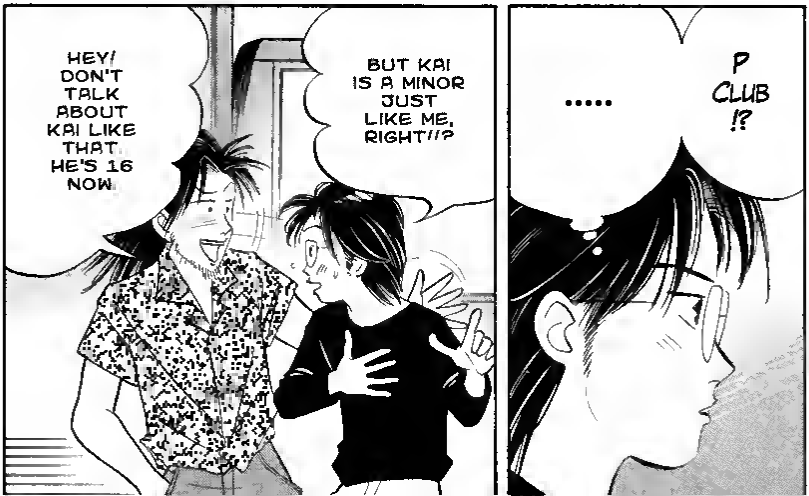
YOU DON'T HAVE TO THANK ME!!
AHA-HAHA!!

I THOUGHT I MIGHT NEVER BE ABLE TO SEE KAI AGAIN
I...
KAI IS GOING TO BE SO HAPPY !!!
SORRY ABOUT THAT!
AHH!
ONCE THEY HEAR ME ASKING ABOUT KAI?
WHY DOES EVERY-ONE PRETEND NOT TO KNOW,
EVERY-ONE HERE DECIDED TO PRETEND THAT WE DIDN'T KNOW HIM
SO... KAI TOLD US, "IF THEY FIND OUT ABOUT MY LIFE AT THE FOREST'S EDGE, THEY MIGHT KICK ME OUT"
Every single one of us did it! Probably because we're a bunch of idiots.
AND HE'S STUDYING SO HARD, HE BARELY HAS ANY TIME TO SLEEP... MEAN-WHILE TRYING TO COMBINE WORK
THE TRUTH IS, HE'S GOTTEN INTO A SUPER ELITE HIGH SCHOOL.

ANYHOW, IF THAT RUMOR EVER GOT OUT,
HE'D BE EXPELLED FOR SURE!
...
THEN, THEN... HIS JOB, TOO.
THAT'S RIGHT. IF THAT EVER GOT OUT, IT'D BE BAD NEWS, TOO.
BUT ALL OF HIS CO-WORKERS ARE REALLY MOTIVATED.
THEY ALL COME DRESSED AS CLOWNS AND PUT UP THEIR PERFORMANCE!!!
EVEN DURING SUMMER, WHEN IT'S REALLY HOT, THEY JUST SAY, "NOT MUCH WE CAN DO ABOUT THE HEAT."
EVERYONE IS REALLY HAPPY.
THEY EVEN HAVE MASCOT COSTUMES!! NOW THOSE ARE HOT!!
KAI.
KAI!

CLUB

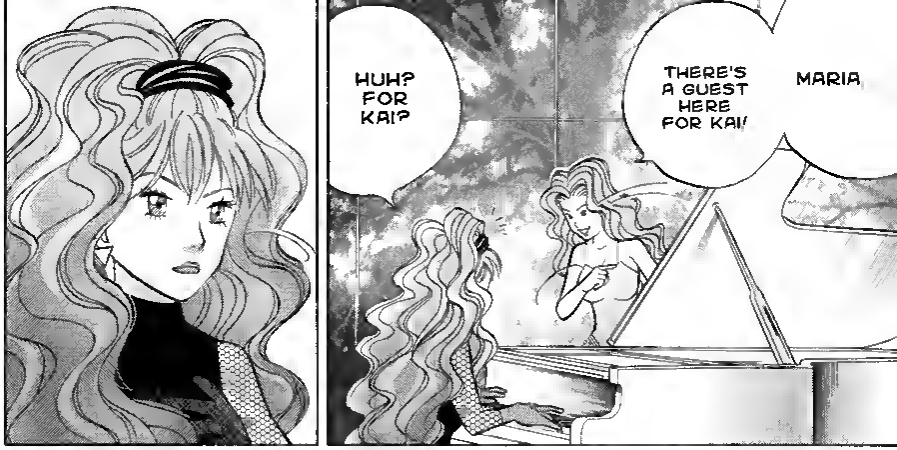
HERE
THIS IS WHERE KAI IS
P.S.W.P

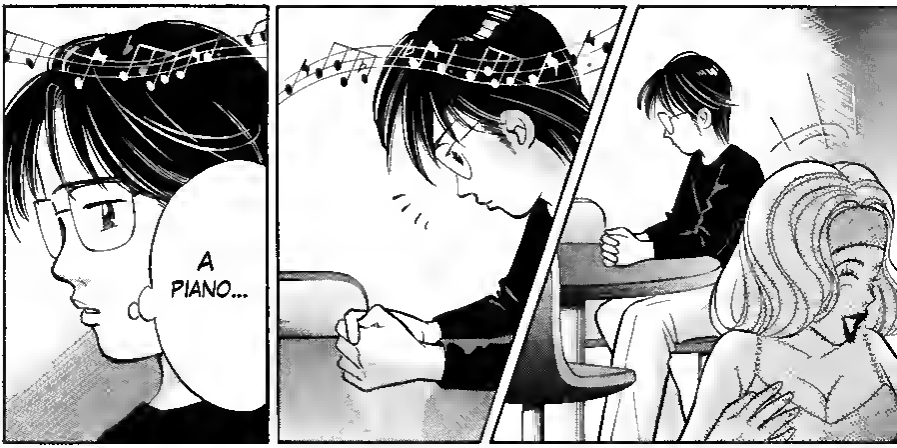

HEY! DON'T TALK ABOUT KAI LIKE THAT. HE'S 16 NOW.
BUT KAI IS A MINOR JUST LIKE ME, RIGHT!!?
.....
P CLUB !?

BUSINESS MUST BE BOOMIN', HUH BEN? COMING OVER SO SOON AL-READY!! ♡
OH MY GOD, I'M SO HAPPY!! ♡
PUB
AHHH BEN!!!
AND TEN-MARU! ♡
I'M HERE BECAUSE I BROUGHT A GUEST ALONG FOR KAI.
YOU WISH! NO MATTER HOW "BOOMING" BUSINESS WOULD BE, LIKE I'D COME OVER EARLY JUST TO SEE YOU DANCE!!

DON'T YOU GIRLS EAT HIM ALIVE, NOW! ♡
Pffft!
KAI'S GUEST?
OOH, HE'S CUTE. ♡
OH, HELLO THERE, HANDSOME! ♡
WELCOME! ♡
UHM...
PLEASE HAVE A SEAT HERE, AND HE'LL BE RIGHT ALONG!
HEY, THAT'S ENOUGH HE'S KAI'S GUEST!
HUH? KAI'S?

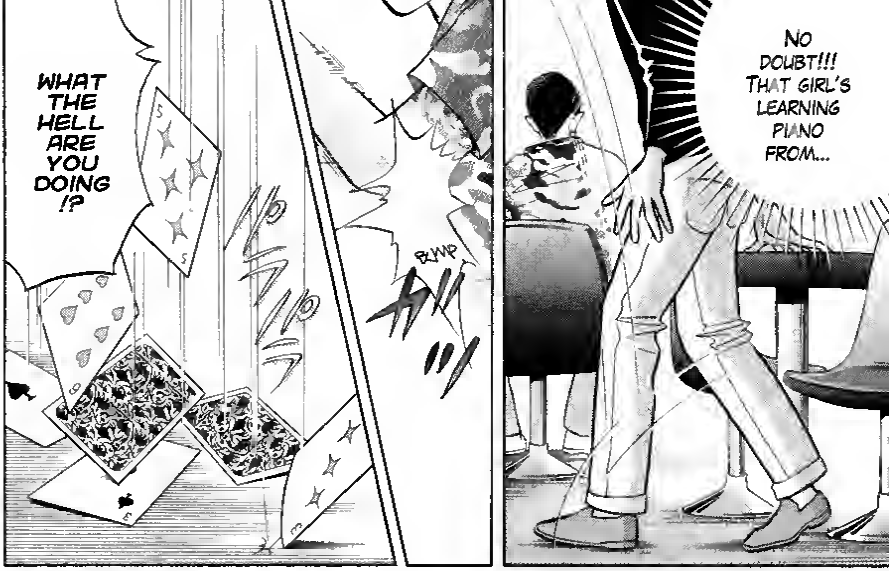
WHAT...
MARIA!
IS KAI REALLY HERE!?
WHAT THE HELL IS THIS PLACE!?


HUH? FOR KAI?
THERE'S A GUEST HERE FOR KAI!
MARIA

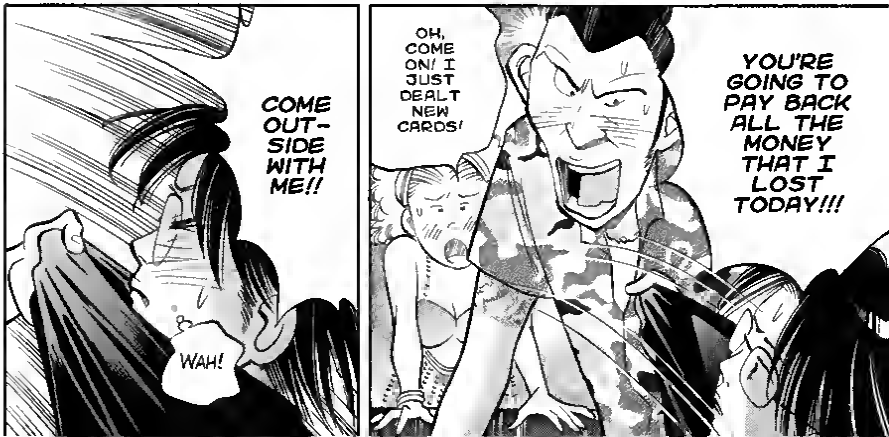

A PIANO...

THEY PLAY CLASSICAL MUSIC IN HERE...?
WHAT THE...?

HUH?
THIS...
THIS FEEL-ING.
AHH...
NOT BAD AT ALL.
IT'S QUITE GOOD.
THIS PIANO,
HAS THE SOUND OF KAI'S HAND !!!


WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING !?
BLYAP
NO DOUBT!!! THAT GIRL'S LEARNING PIANO FROM...

DAMN BASTARD. "SORRY" JUST AIN'T GONNA CUT IT!!
I'M SORRY !!


COME OUT-SIDE WITH ME!!
WAH!
OH, COME ON! I JUST DEALT NEW CARDS!
YOU'RE GOING TO PAY BACK ALL THE MONEY THAT I LOST TODAY!!!

THERE'S JUST NO REASONING WITH THEM AT ALL.
I HATE THESE KIND OF GUYS.
PUB
PLEASE, SIR!!
SO HOW ARE YOU GOING TO PAY ME BACK, KID!?
GO GET ME CASH RIGHT NOW. TEN MILLION YEN!!!

ARE YOU PEOPLE RETARD-ED?
HUH!?
AREN'T YOU GONNA SELL YOUR ORGANS OR SOME-THING, KID!?

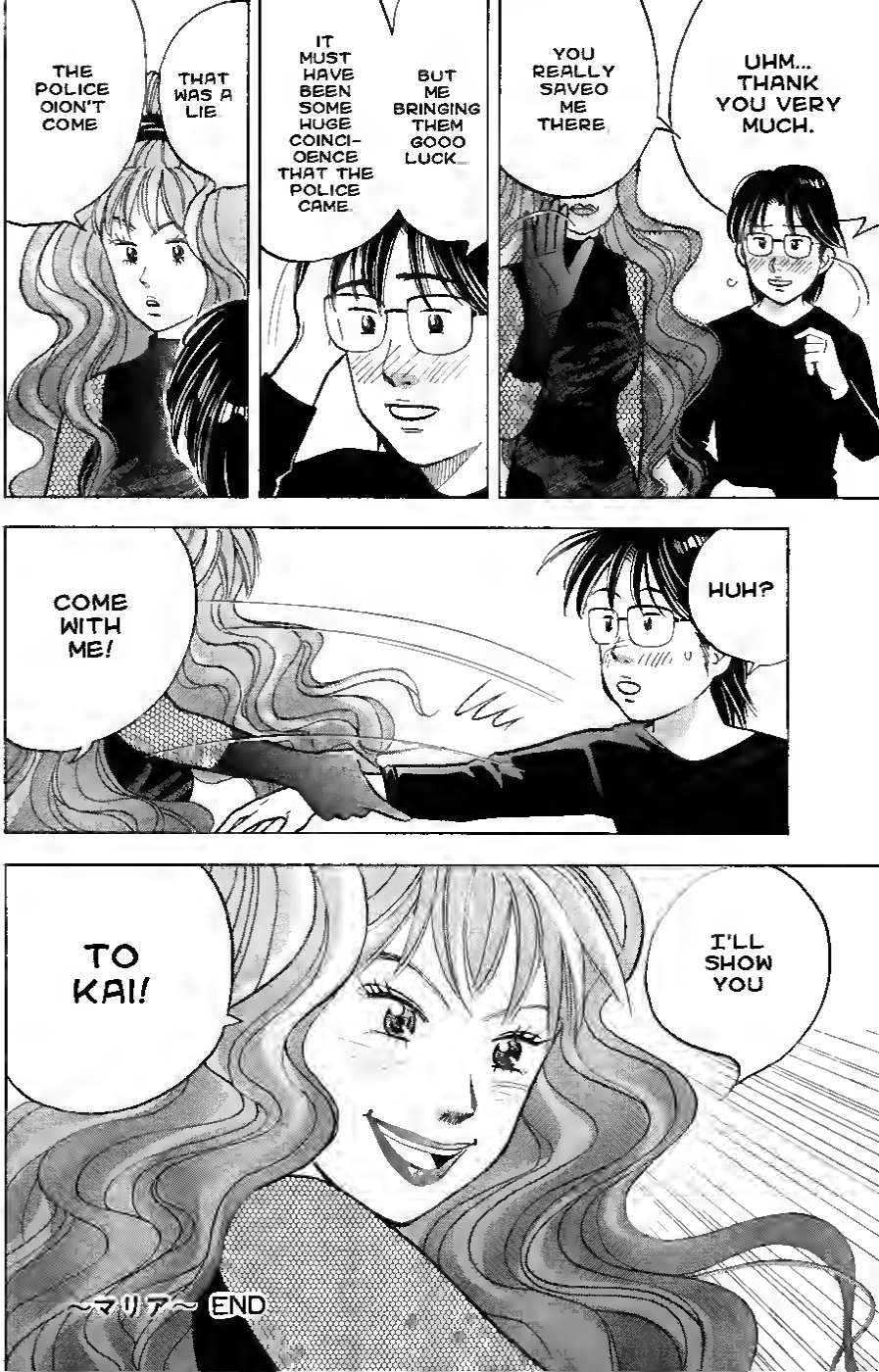
IT'S JUST THAT... BECAUSE OF HIM, I JUST SUFFERED A HUGE LOSS!!!
WE'RE NOT RE-TARDED, MARIA!

THANKS TO HIM, YOU'VE BEEN SAVED.
THAT'S WHY I'M SAYING YOU'RE RETARD-ED.

HUH !?

MARIA !!

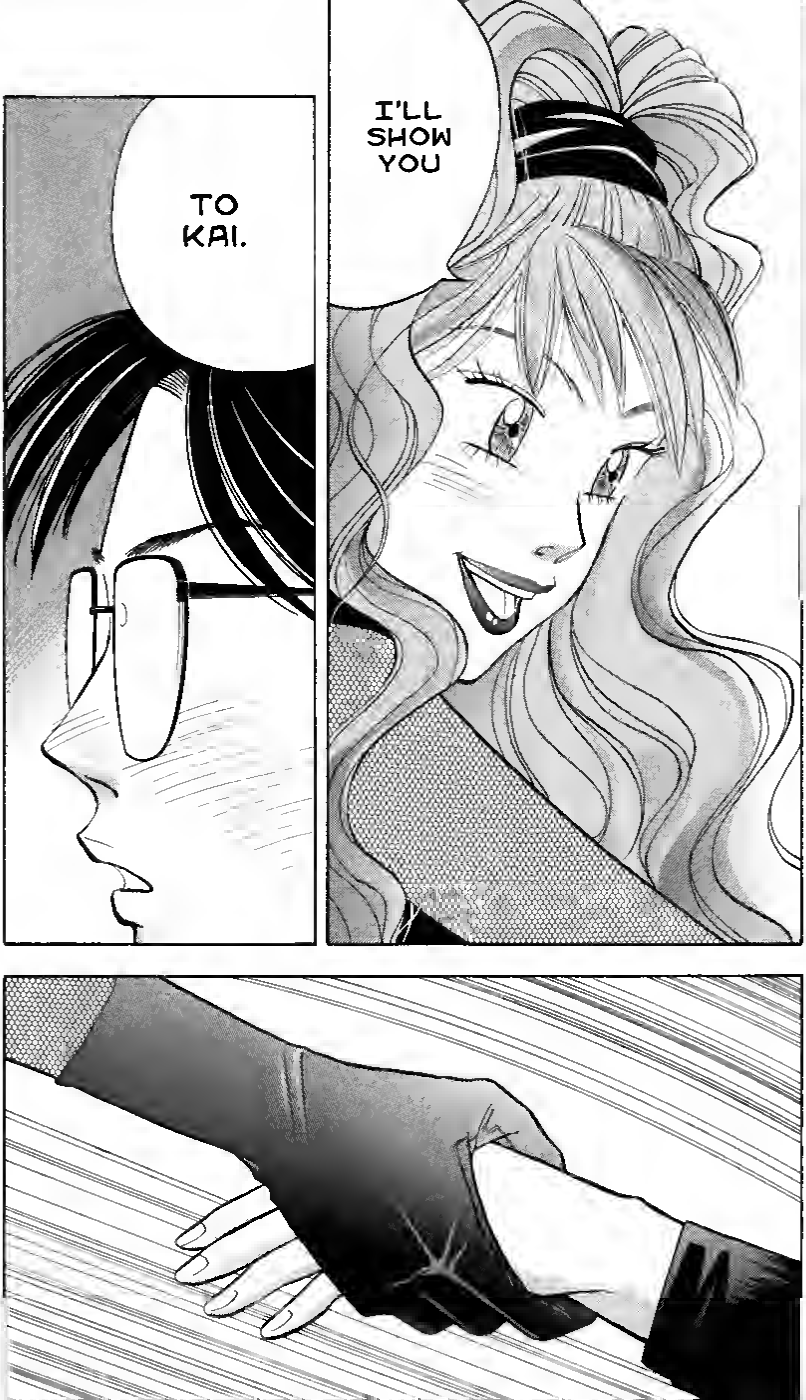
HAVE YOU GUYS BEEN UP TO NO GOOD?
SO I NEED TO ASK.
PROBABLY TRYING TO BUST SOME PEOPLE ILLEGALLY GAMBLING
SOME COPS CAME THROUGH THE BACK JUST NOW.
ブリブリ
shake shake
YOU SHOULD BE THANKING HIM.
ANYWAYS, SINCE HE'S BROUGHT YOU SOME GOOO LUCK.
...
WE'LL DEFI-NITELY MAKE IT UP TO YOU SOME-DAY!
I'M SORRY LITTLE MAN!!!
CAUSE IF YOU GOT CAUGHT NOW, YOU'D BE STUCK IN JAIL FOR A YEAR OR TWO.


THE POLICE DIDN'T COME
THAT WAS A LIE
IT MUST HAVE BEEN SOME HUGE COINCI-DENCE THAT THE POLICE CAME.
BUT ME BRINGING THEM GOOD LUCK.
YOU REALLY SAVED ME THERE
UHM... THANK YOU VERY MUCH.
COME WITH ME!
HUH?
TO KAI!
I'LL SHOW YOU
~マリア~ END

piano no mori
chapter 63
p n y x t r
barbapapa
Unproductive

Chapter 63

Reunion


TO KAI.
I'LL SHOW YOU

HEY MARIA
HER NAME IS MARIA...
THE PIANIST OF "P CLUB"
HURRY UP! HURRY UP!
!
CRAP!

AH!
AHH, THESE GLOVES ARE SO SLIPPERY!
ARGH, I HATE THESE ANNOYING HEELS!
HUH?
OH RIGHT, I FORGOT!
THESE GLOVES ARE SEWN ON. CAN'T TAKE THEM OFF!
MA-
MARIA!

THE COSTUME DESIGNERS DO THEIR BEST BUT I WAS SURE IN FOR A SURPRISE WHEN I PUT THIS ON TODAY!
I WAS, THOUGH!! CAN YOU BELIEVE IT!?
YOU WEREN'T PLAYING THE PIANO WITH THOSE GLOVES ON JUST NOW, RIGHT?
PLEASE TELL ME

WEARING THOSE GLOVES... AND PLAYING AT SUCH A TEMPO...!?
THAT'S NOT WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT, MARIA
LET'S GO GIVE THEM HELL ABOUT IT!!
THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND PIANO PLAYERS AT ALL!

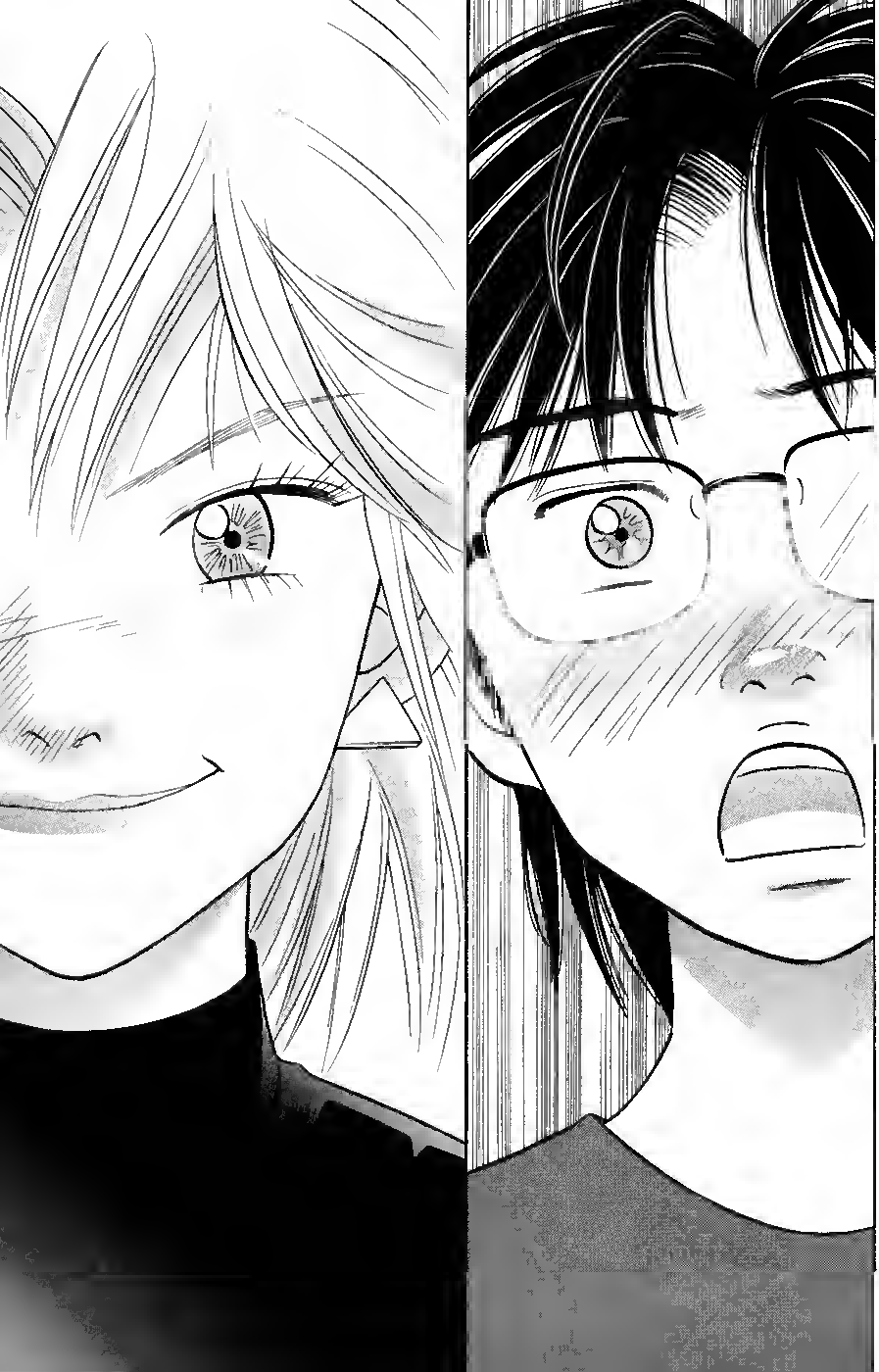
KAI IS THE ONE
TEACHING YOU THE PIANO, RIGHT?
UHM, KAI...
NOT NOW!
MARIA, CAN I ASK YOU SOME-THING?

I KNEW IT! YOUR MUSIC, IT REALLY SOUNDS LIKE KAI'S PIANO!!
I'M SORRY ...
SINCE WHEN!?
WHOA!
SHHHT!

UHM... MARIA,
PERHAPS THAT WASN'T SUPPOSED TO GET OUT?
BUT YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY!! UHM..
BE-CAUSE I WON'T TELL ANY-ONE.
HEHE HEHE !!
カン
コン
AHA HAHA HA!!
HUH?

I'M SO SORRY, AMAMIYA !!
IT'S ME! IT'S ME!
ばっ
UH...

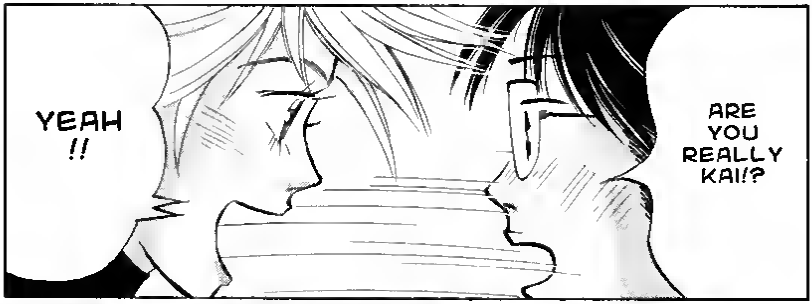
K-
KAI!?



AMAMIYA!! I CAN'T BELIEVE I GOT TO SEE YOU AGAIN! THIS IS AMAZING, IT'S LIKE I'M DREAMING! I DIDN'T THINK FOR A MINUTE THAT YOU'D COME TO SEE ME!!

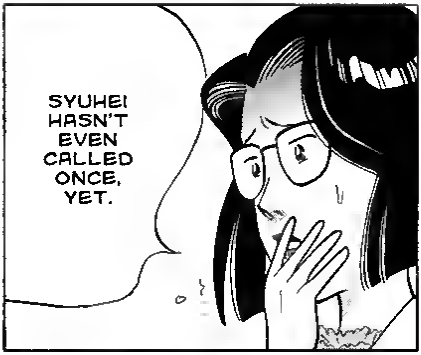
WHEN I SAW YOU OUT THERE ON THE STAGE...
I WAS SO HAPPY, I COULD HAVE RAN OVER THERE AND HUGGED YOU!! I REALLY HAD TO HOLD BACK!

IS...
IS IT REALLY YOU, KAI!?
IS...

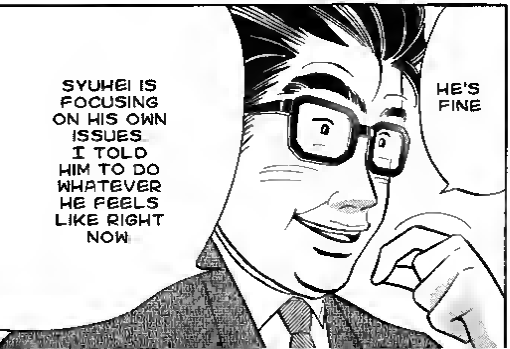

YEAH !!
ARE YOU REALLY KAI!?

FINALLY...
カ
ズ
キ!!
FINALLY...

I FINALLY FOUND YOU!


SYUHEI HASN'T EVEN CALLED ONCE, YET.

IT'S ALREADY PAST NINE!!


SYUHEI IS FOCUSING ON HIS OWN ISSUES. I TOLD HIM TO DO WHATEVER HE FEELS LIKE RIGHT NOW.
HE'S FINE

NAMIE, YOU'VE JUST ARRIVED HERE AFTER A LONG FLIGHT, YOU MUST BE TIRED
WHAT KIND OF LOGIC IS THAT!
DON'T THEY ALWAYS SAY, "NO NEWS IS GOOD NEWS?"
MOTHER,
PLEASE, WORRY ABOUT SYUHEI BEFORE YOU START WORRYING ABOUT ME!
NAMIE,
I'VE BEEN EXPLAINING THE CRUX OF THE ISSUE TO YOU ALL THE WAY HOME FROM THE AIRPORT... BUT IT SEEMS LIKE YOU JUST DON'T GET IT.
I GET IT ALRIGHT YOU'RE TELLING ME TO "STAY AWAY FROM HIM!"
BUT MY CHILD ISN'T HIS USUAL SELF RIGHT NOW!

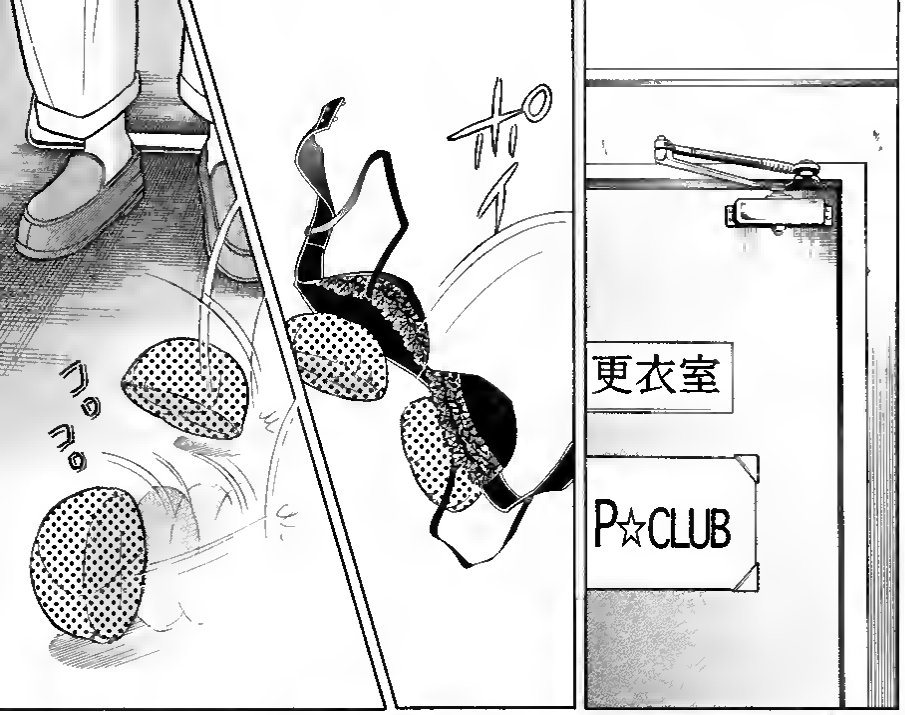
TO SEARCH FOR HIMSELF.
SYUHEI CAME TO JAPAN
THAT'S WHY YOU HAVE TO LEAVE HIM ALONE!!!
EXACTLY!
Youichiro, you don't need to be so loud...
AMAMIYA, WHEN DID YOU ARRIVE IN JAPAN!?

ABOUT A WEEK AGO
CLASSES ARE ON BREAK
THEN, THEN, HOW LONG ARE YOU GOING TO STAY?
ARGH, THERE'S SO MANY QUESTIONS I WANT TO ASK!
AHAHA, ME, TOO!
coffee
coffee

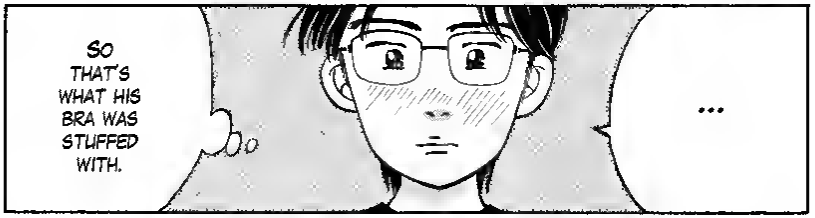
ARE YOU SURE!?
EH?
THEN HOW ABOUT STAYING AT MY PLACE FOR A WHILE!?
REAL-LY!?
SCHOOL VACA-TIONS ARE LONG THERE!
I'LL BE STAYING FOR A WHILE
IS THAT MARIA FROM P-CLUB OVER THERE?
HUH—!?
AHHH, MARIA FROM P-CLUB IS OVER HERE
WHAT'S GOIN' ON?
SHIT!
SHE SEEMS DIFFER-ENT— BUT IT'S MARIA
SUCH A BIG AND BEAUTIFUL WOMAN THOSE ARE REALLY RARE

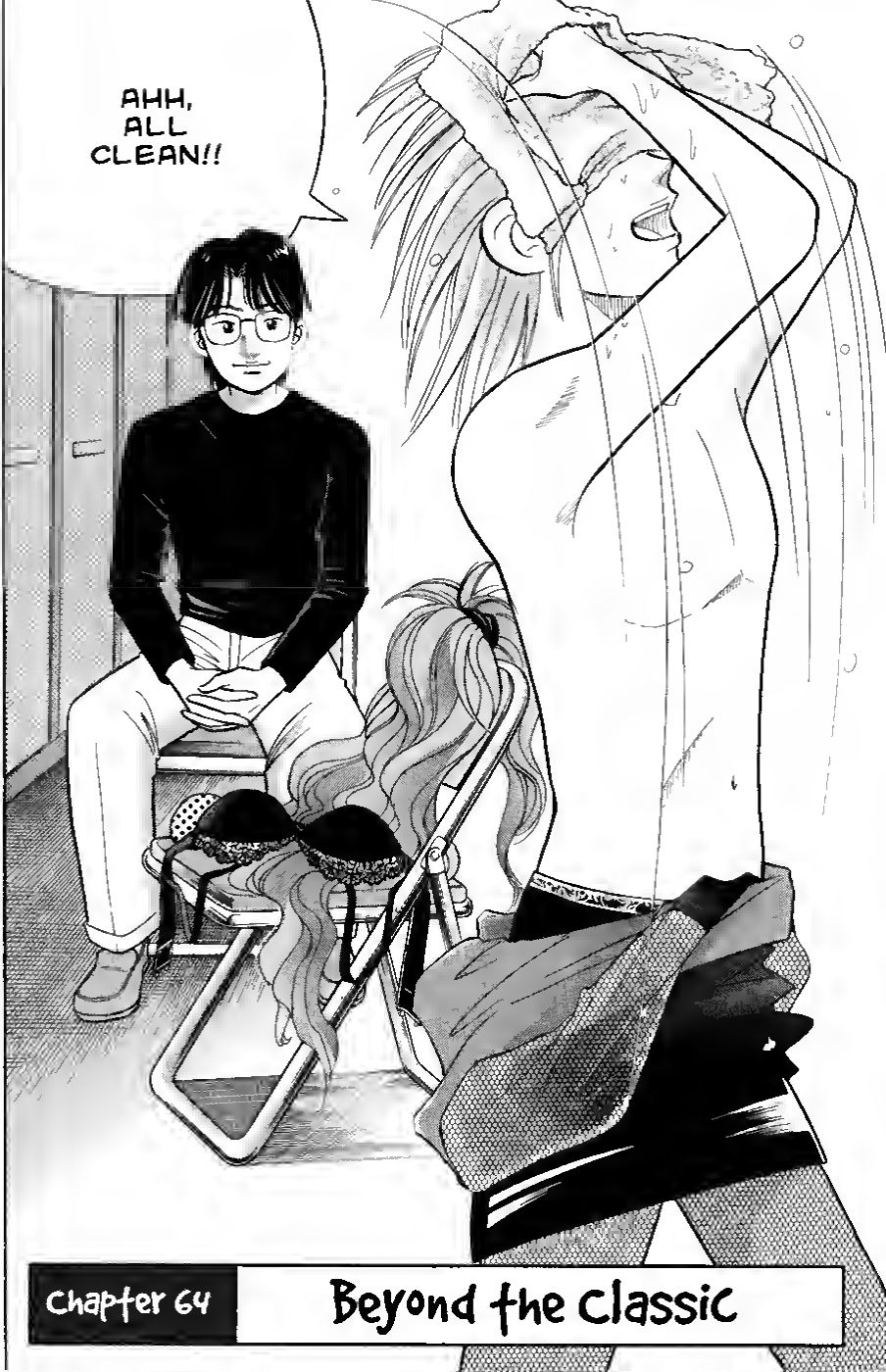
AHAHAHA... WE'LL HAVE TO RUN ALL THE WAY TO THE BACK ENTRANCE OF THE CLUB, AMAMIYA.
YOU OKAY WITH THAT?
SURE!
AHH!
BE CAREFUL THOUGH ♡
HEH.
KAI'S DEFINITELY BIG! PLUS HIS VOICE IS ALSO TOO DEEP FOR A WOMAN.
I FINALLY FOUND YOU!
~再会~ END

piano no mori
chapter 64
p n y x t r
barbapapa
Unproductive



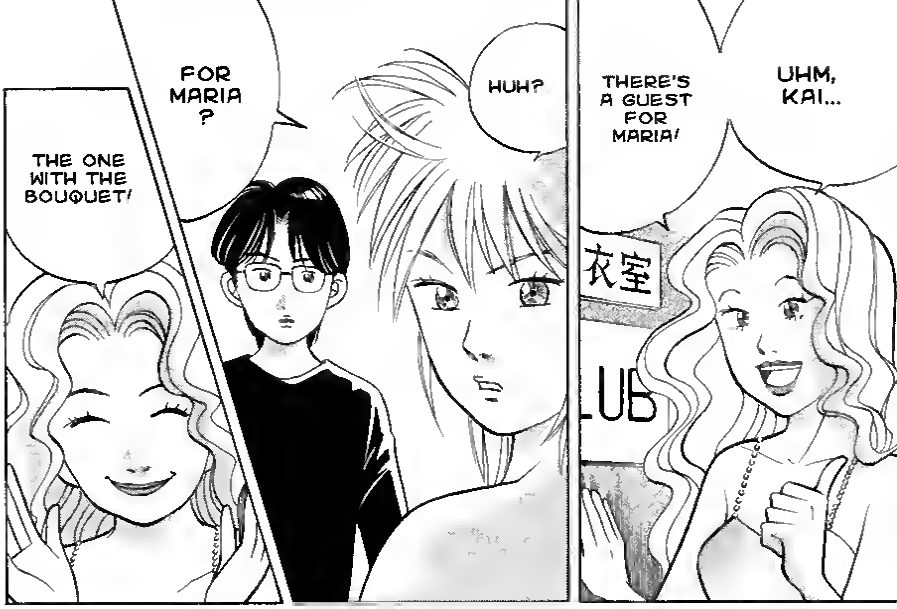
* Changing room

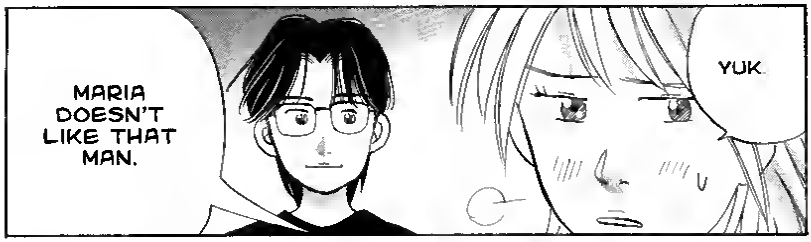


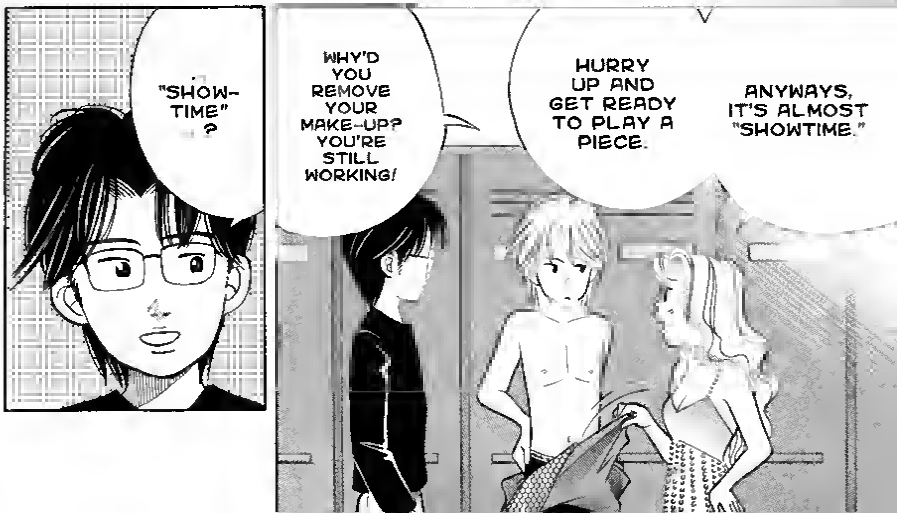


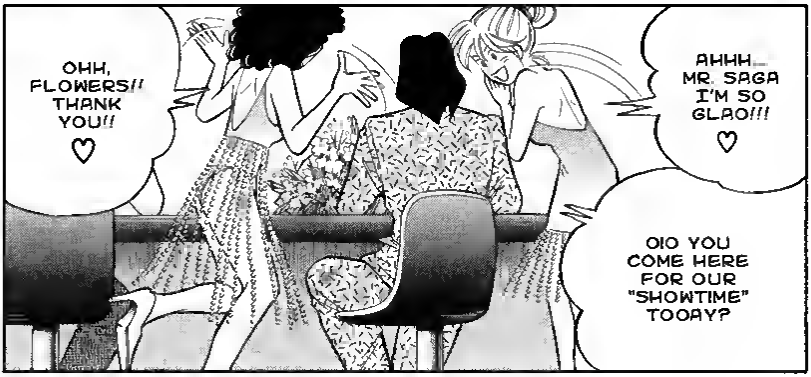
Chapter 64 Beyond the Classic

OF COURSE KAI COULDN'T BE HIMSELF AT WORK.
AHAHA
I'VE BEEN SO NAÏVE.
HAHA.. THAT'S THE KAI I REMEMBER NOW
ナデナデ

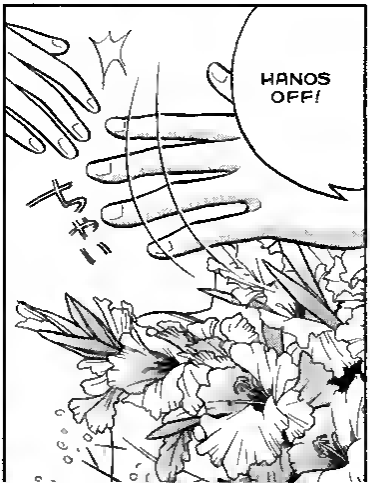

FOR MARIA ?
HUH?
THE ONE WITH THE BOUQUET!
UHM, KAI...
THERE'S A GUEST FOR MARIA!
衣室
LUB

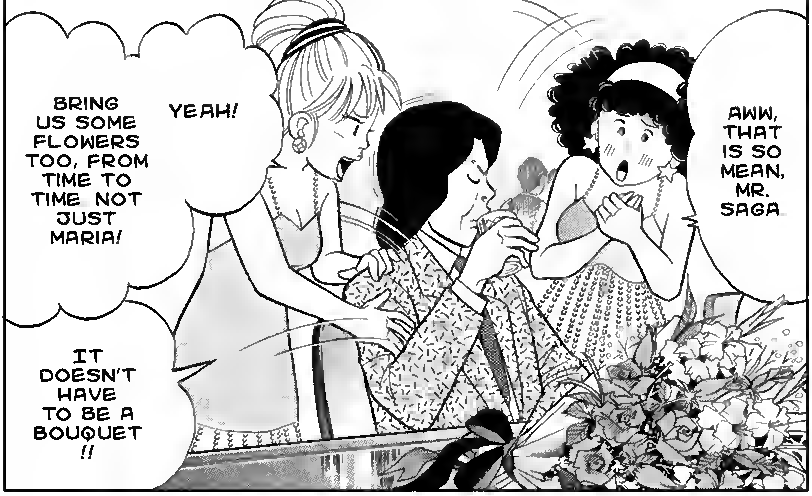

MARIA DOESN'T LIKE THAT MAN.
YUK.


"SHOW-TIME" ?
WHY'D YOU REMOVE YOUR MAKE-UP? YOU'RE STILL WORKING!
HURRY UP AND GET READY TO PLAY A PIECE.
ANYWAYS, IT'S ALMOST "SHOWTIME."

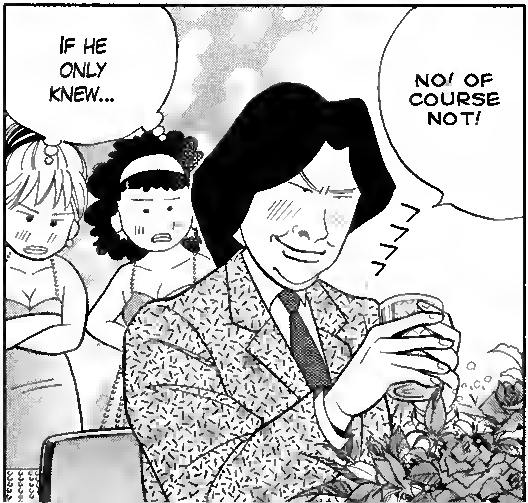

OHH, FLOWERS!! THANK YOU!!
♡
AHHH... MR. SAGA I'M SO GLAD!!!
♡
OIO YOU COME HERE FOR OUR "SHOWTIME" TODAY?

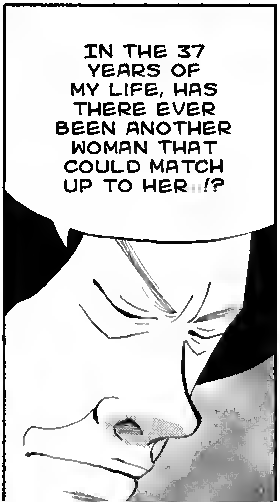
THESE FLOWERS AREN'T FOR YOU!
I DIDN'T COME HERE TO WATCH YOUR STRIPPING.


HANDS OFF!
ちゃー


AWW, THAT IS SO MEAN, MR. SAGA.
YEAH!
BRING US SOME FLOWERS TOO, FROM TIME TO TIME NOT JUST MARIA!
IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE A BOUQUET !!

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT!
OTHER THAN MARIA, THERE IS NOTHING ELSE WORTH COMING TO SEE IN THIS CLUB.


NO! OF COURSE NOT!
IF HE ONLY KNEW...


IN THE 37 YEARS OF MY LIFE, HAS THERE EVER BEEN ANOTHER WOMAN THAT COULD MATCH UP TO HER...!?

SHE IS THE MOST PERFECT PIANIST THAT I HAVE EVER MET...!
AND...

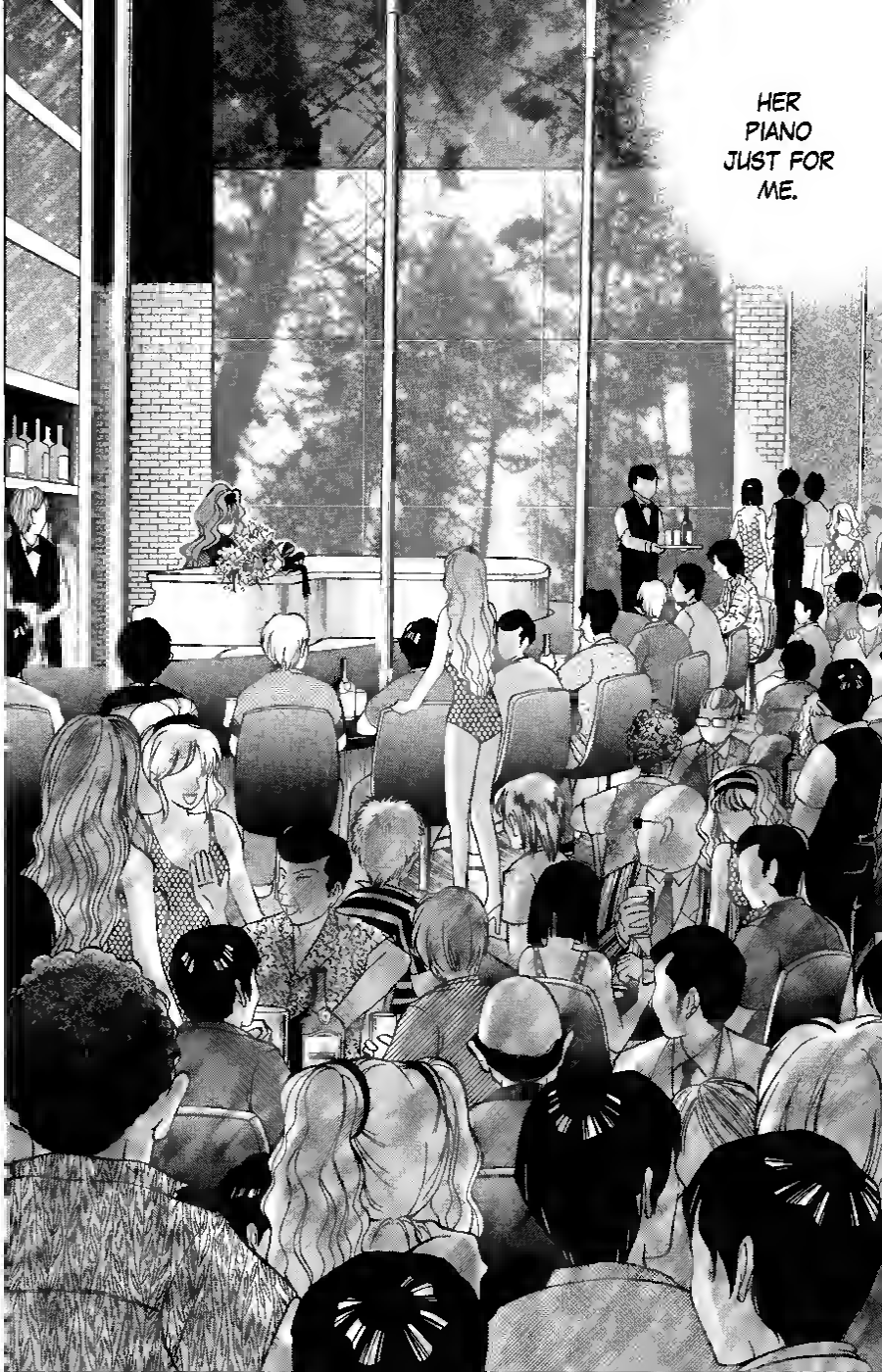
I HAVE TO ADMIT, HIGH CLASS EXOTIC DANCING IS QUITE A SIGHT TO BEHOLD
HOW RUDE TALKING ABOUT US LIKE WE'RE JUST STRIPPERS
DON'T COMPARE US TO THOSE LOW-CLASS STRIPPERS AT OTHER PLACES
IT'S FINE!! IF YOU'RE GOING TO STUFF IT, IT'S BETTER TO GO ALL THE WAY!!
I DON'T REALLY CARE... BUT DON'T YOU THINK YOU OVERDID THIS?
YOU DON'T GET IT!! WHAT WE'RE DOING IS ART !!
D'YOU MIND WAITING FOR ME A WHILE?
SO AMA-MIYA
チャキ-ン

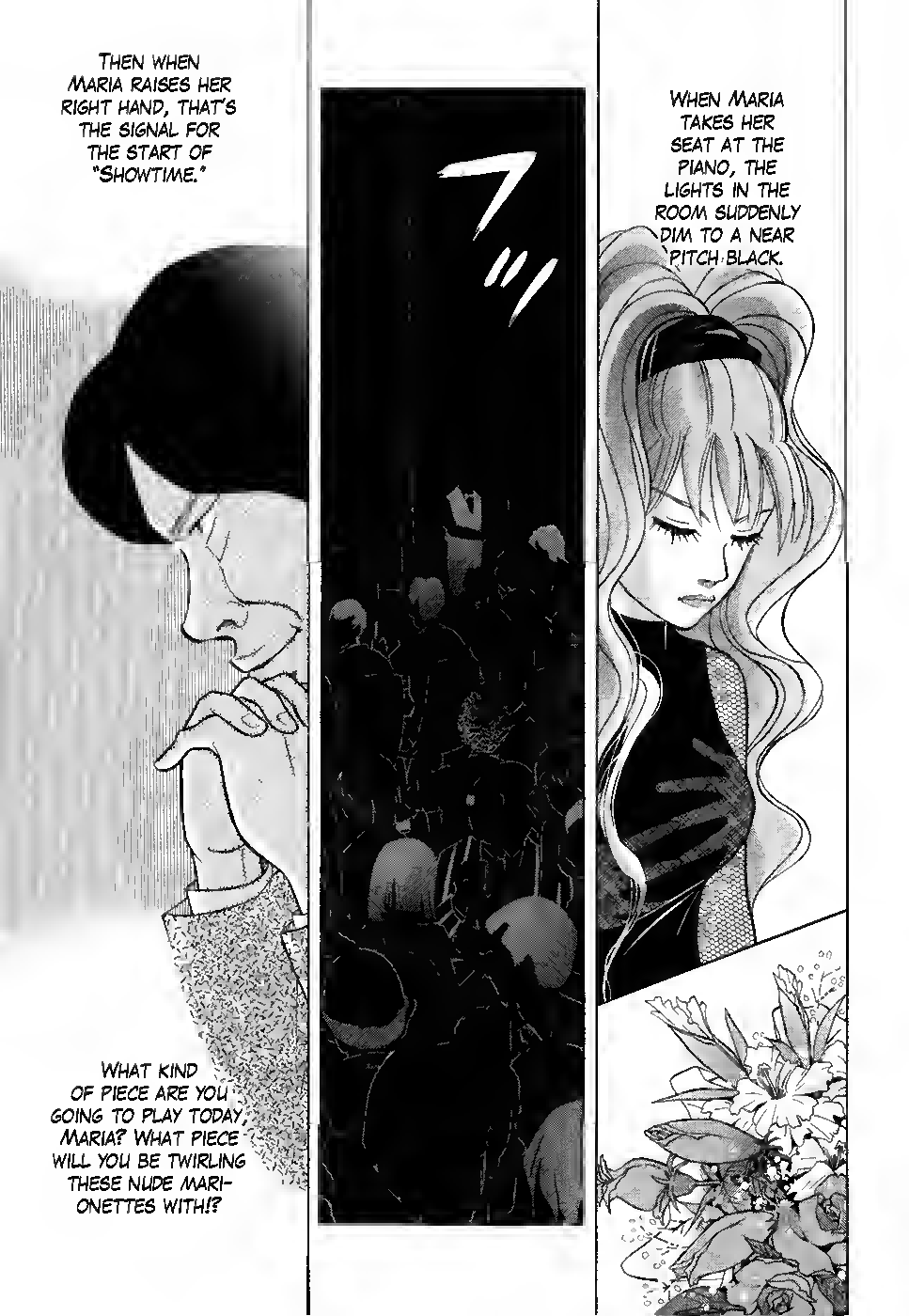
TIME FOR WORK!
I CAN GET TO HEAR KAI'S PIANO!!!

WH-
WHAT A WOMAN.
MARIA!
MA-
LOOK, YOUR LONG AWAITED MARIA!
AHH, LOOK, SHE'S HERE!!

ハイ
カチ
ニコッ
THIS IS FOR YOU.
WELCOME, AND THANK YOU FOR COMING.
TONIGHT, I'LL DEDICATE MY PLAYING ENTIRELY TO YOU.
THANK YOU FOR ALWAYS

SHE WILL NOT BE SWAYED BY ANYTHING IN THIS WORLD.
MARIA IS NOT ONE TO BE IMPRESSED BY GIFTS SUCH AS FLOWERS.
THERE IT IS. THAT SAUCY SMILE, ON HER LIPS, THAT COCKY GLEAM OF HER EYES, THAT AIR OF CONFIDENCE AND ARROGANCE IN HER WORDS.
SHE WILL NOT BELONG TO ANYONE.
SHE WON'T BE PLAYING
AND OF COURSE,


HER
PIANO
JUST FOR
ME.


Then when Maria raises her right hand, that's the signal for the start of "Showtime."
When Maria takes her seat at the piano, the lights in the room suddenly dim to a near pitch black.
What kind of piece are you going to play today, Maria? What piece will you be twirling these nude marionettes with!?

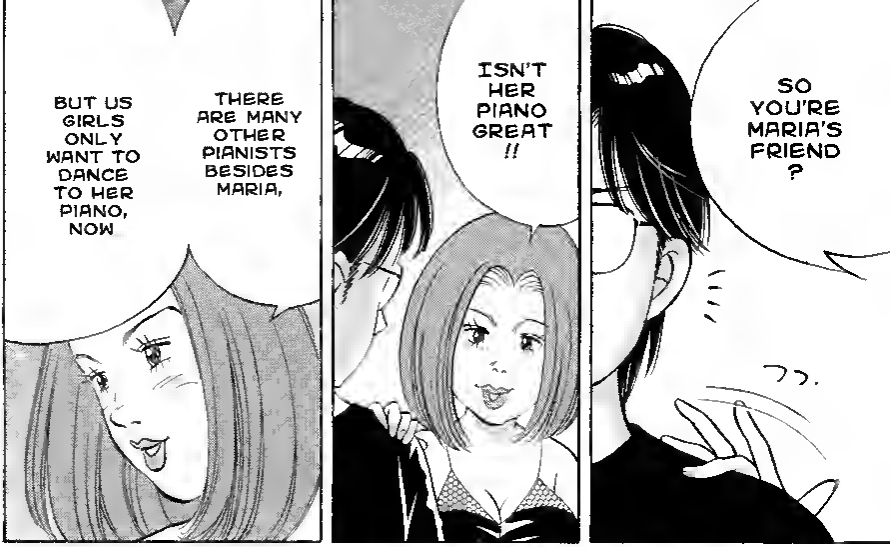
THIS WAY, OVER HERE
CARE-FUL. IT'S DARK.
THE PLACE IS ALWAYS PACKED DURING SHOWTIME, SO YOU'LL HAVE TO STAND.
AHH, IT'S STARTING NOW.

!!
!!

WH-
SHE'S USING A CLASSIC TO ACCOMPANY STRIPPERS AS THEY PERFORM?
ISN'T THIS BACH'S ENGLISH SUITE NUMBER TWO!?
WHAT A WOMAN.

KAI, THIS...
KA-
YOU HAVE A MIND TO DESECRATE THE CLASSICS !?
MARIA !!
HEHEHE.

THIS...


SO YOU'RE MARIA'S FRIEND ?
ISN'T HER PIANO GREAT !!
THERE ARE MANY OTHER PIANISTS BESIDES MARIA,
BUT US GIRLS ONLY WANT TO DANCE TO HER PIANO, NOW

THE GIRLS THAT DANCE TO MARIA'S PIANO SEEM LIKE COMPLETE OTHER PEOPLE
LIKE WE'RE DANCERS ON BROADWAY!
HAHA
WE DON'T HAVE ANY STAGE SONGS, THOUGH

MARIA'S PIANO
DOESN'T JUST GET THEM GOING DOWN THERE,
IT ALSO TOUCHES THEM IN THEIR HEARTS.
OH, WHAT AM I TALKING ABOUT! YOU'RE TOO YOUNG TO UNDER-STAND!
KAI'S PIANO...
KAI'S PIANO GETS...
A BIT OF ANGER WELLING UP INSIDE OF ME.
THIS PIANO...

IT'S TORTURING THE GOD OF MUSIC.
Beyond the classic END

piano no mori
chapter 65
p n y x t r
barbapapa
Unproductive

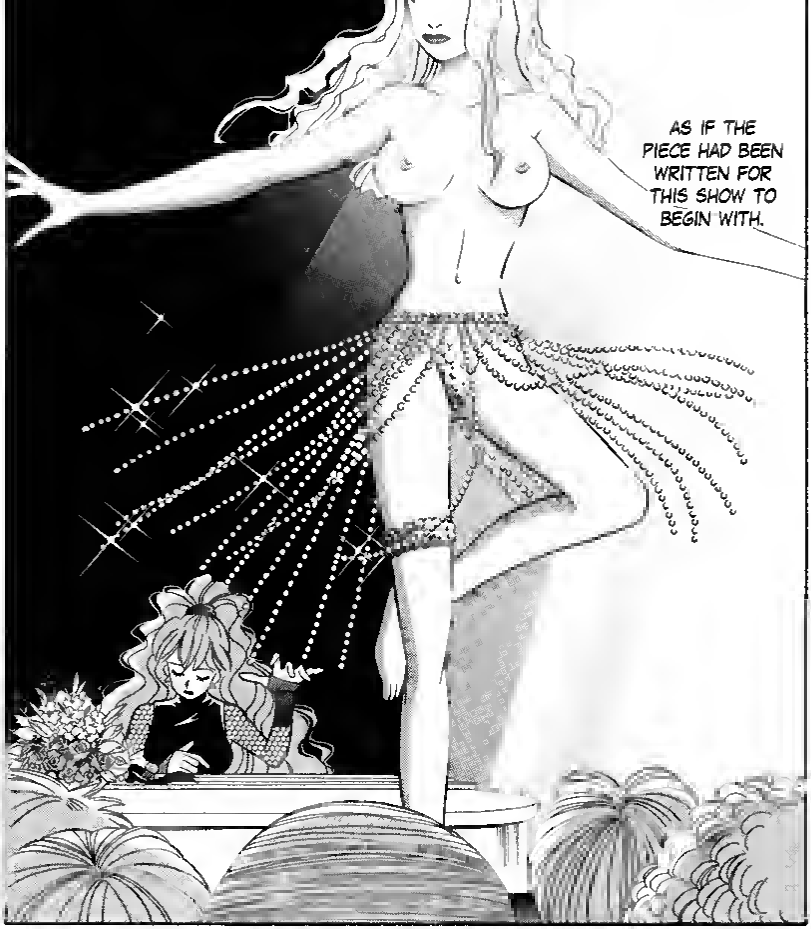
MARIA...
KAI...

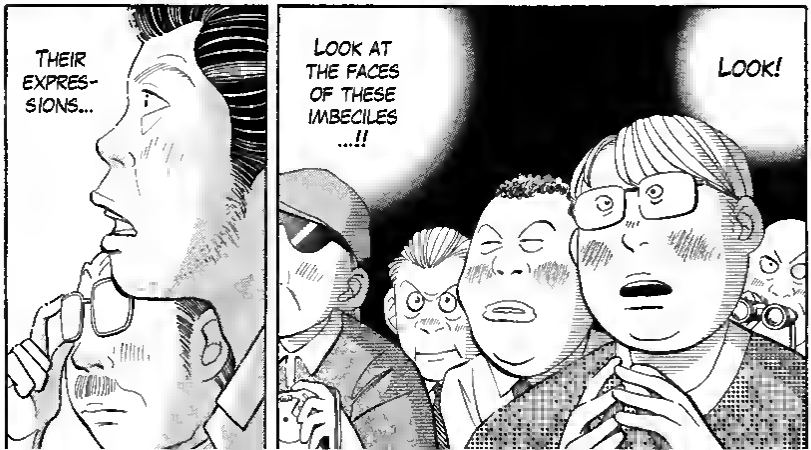
KAI!!

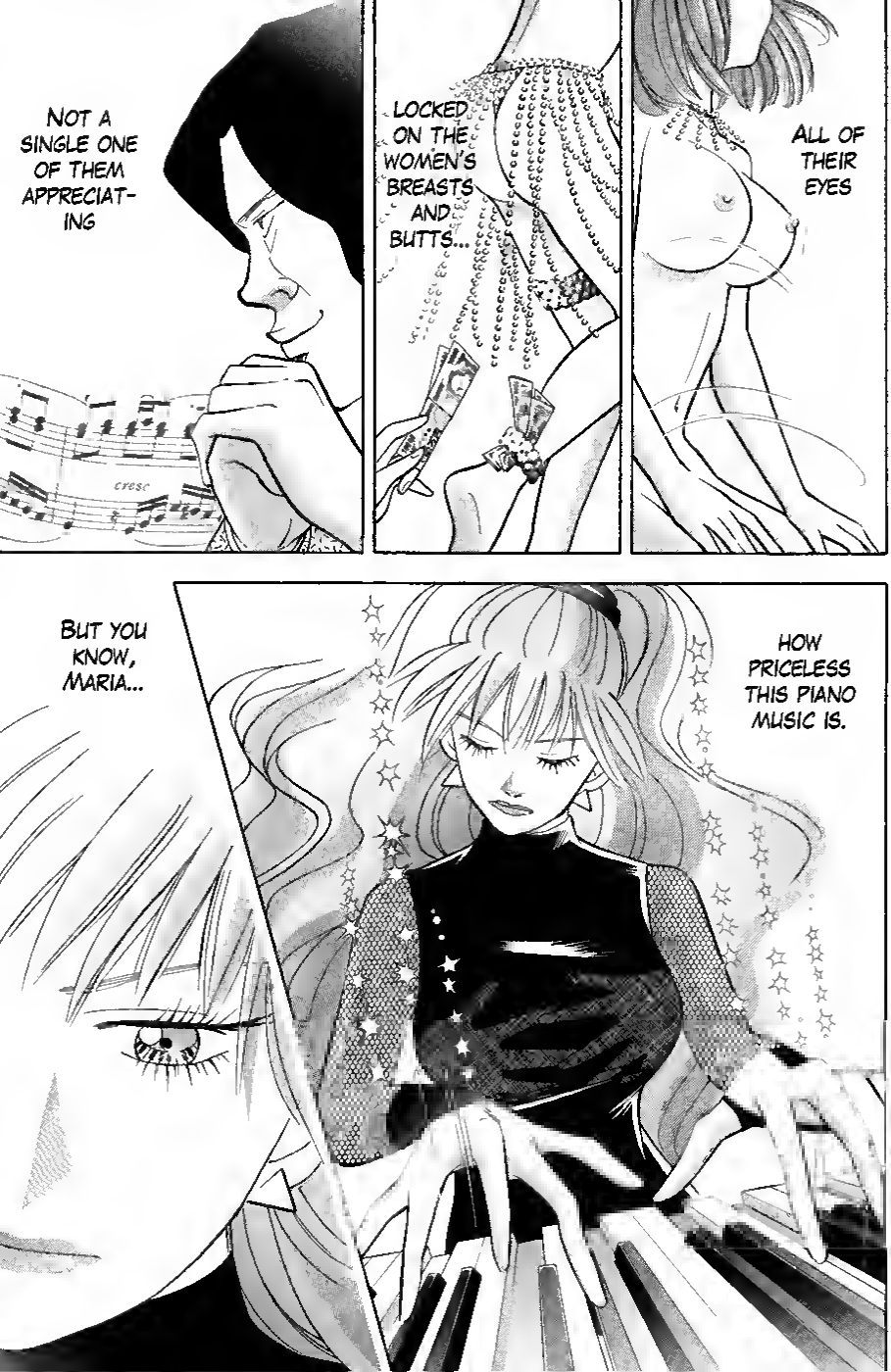
Chapter 65
Hallelujah

The Perfect World of KAI

I AM SPEECH-LESS.
WITHOUT REARRANGING IT AT ALL...
CAN A PIECE WITH SUCH STRONG AND DEEP EMOTIONS
REALLY BE MOLDED INTO SUCH AN AMAZING ACCOMPANIMENT TO EXOTIC DANCING?
IT'S MAKING THE VULGAR ACT OF STRIPPING
INTO A VIBRANT ART FORM OF THE HUMAN BODY,


AS IF THE PIECE HAD BEEN WRITTEN FOR THIS SHOW TO BEGIN WITH.


THEIR EXPRES-SIONS...
LOOK AT THE FACES OF THESE IMBECILES ...!!
LOOK!


NOT A SINGLE ONE OF THEM APPRECIAT-ING
cresc
LOCKED ON THE WOMEN'S BREASTS AND BUTTS...
ALL OF THEIR EYES
BUT YOU KNOW, MARIA...
HOW PRICELESS THIS PIANO MUSIC IS.

IF THERE HAPPENED TO BE SOMEONE HERE THAT TRULY LOVED AND APPRECIATED THE CLASSICS,
AREN'T YOU AFRAID THAT HE MIGHT RUN UP AND TRY TO STRANGLE YOU TO DEATH?
...THE MORE AMAZING YOUR PLAY IS... THE MORE HE'D WANT TO.

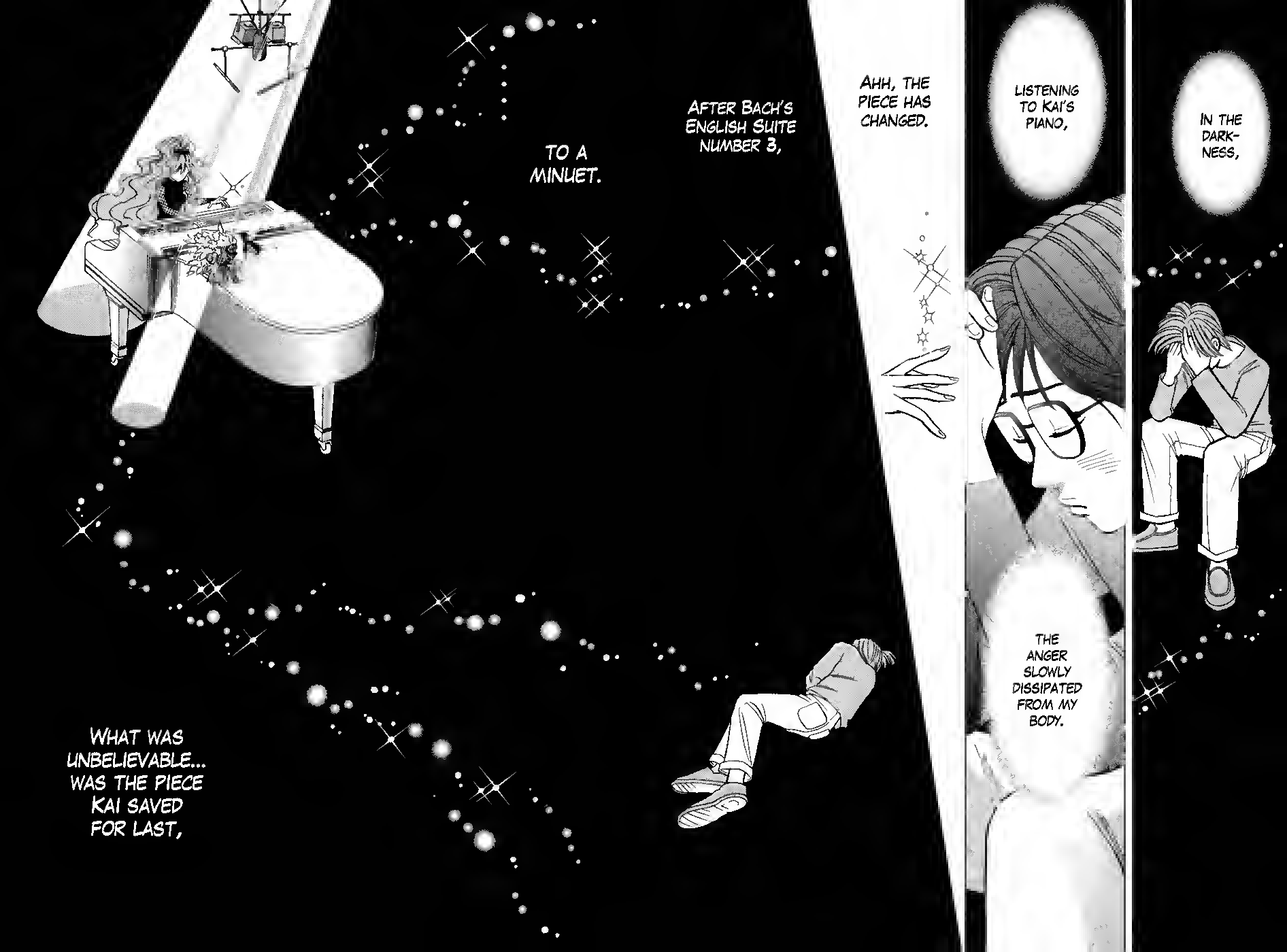
STOP...
STOP IT!!
THIS PIECE WASN'T MEANT TO BE PLAYED IN A PLACE LIKE THIS!!
IT'S GOING AGAINST EVERY CLASSIC THAT I HAVE LEARNED...
THEIR EXTENSIVE, PROFOUND, AND REFINED HISTORY.
KA...
KAI—!!!

PLEASE!!!
DON'T SULLY ALL OF THAT!

MAYBE I SHOULDN'T HAVE COME.
UGH, NO I
JUST BLACKED OUT FOR A LITTLE BIT
HEY, ARE YOU OKAY?
YOUR FACE IS TOTALLY PALE
LIE DOWN HERE AND REST FOR A WHILE
YOU'RE PROBABLY FEELING A BIT ANEMIC
PERHAPS I...

SHOULDN'T HAVE COME TO SEE KAI, AFTER ALL!?
HEHE.
NOW...
I'LL IMMERSE MYSELF IN MARIA'S PIANO.
CLOSE MY EYES...
AND CONCENTRATE SOLELY ON THE PIANO.

THIS IS MY PERSONAL MOMENT OF BLISS.
SAVOR IT.
AND...
MY VERY OWN
INDULGENT TIME WITH MARIA ON STAGE!!


WHAT WAS UNBELIEVABLE... WAS THE PIECE KAI SAVED FOR LAST,
TO A MINUET.
AFTER BACH'S ENGLISH SUITE NUMBER 3,
AHH, THE PIECE HAS CHANGED.
LISTENING TO KAI'S PIANO,
THE ANGER SLOWLY DISSIPATED FROM MY BODY.
IN THE DARK-NESS,

LISZT'S "REQUIEM."
MARIA...
WHY IS YOUR PIANO SO FREE?

BOUND-
LESS.
WHEN I LISTEN TO YOUR PIANO, THE POSSIBILITIES FOR THE PIANO - NO, ALL MUSIC - SEEM...
SO LIBERATED ...

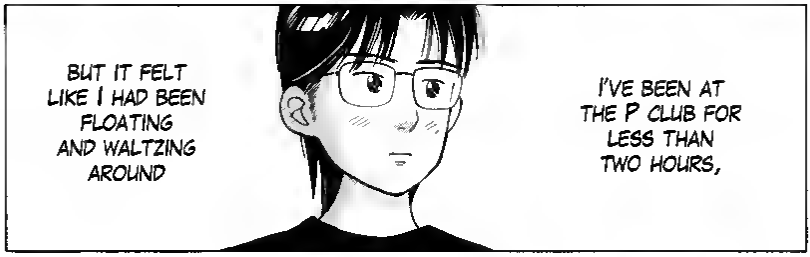
COMPLETELY
BOUNDLESS.

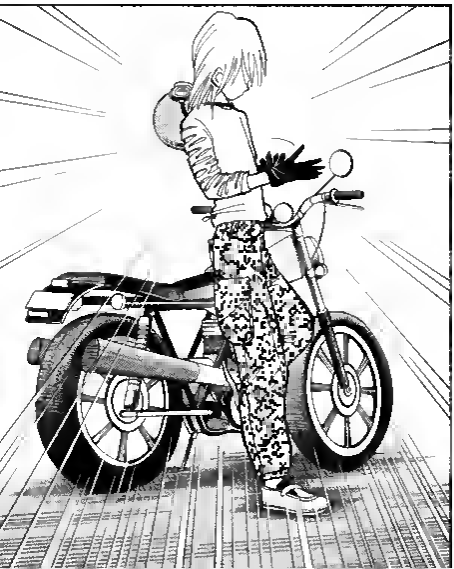
OH, THE SHOW'S ALREADY OVER
UHH, WHAT ABOUT THE SHOW?
DID I WAKE YOU UP?

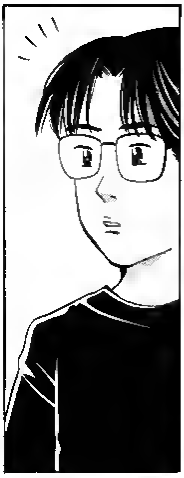
IT SEEMS YOU WERE TAKEN BY SURPRISE WATCHING YOUR FIRST DANCE PERFORMANCE
DON'T WORRY.
SORRY, I UHHH..

KAI IS WAITING FOR YOU THERE.
JUST HEAD FOR THE BACK ENTRANCE.

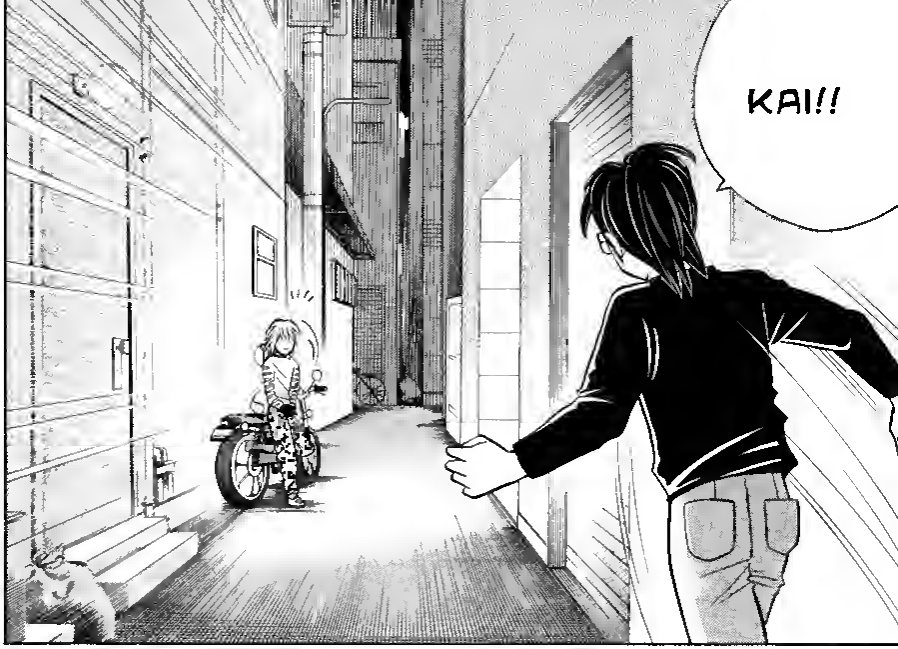
IT FELT LIKE A WHOLE NEW WORLD.


I'VE BEEN AT THE P CLUB FOR LESS THAN TWO HOURS,
BUT IT FELT LIKE I HAD BEEN FLOATING AND WALTZING AROUND

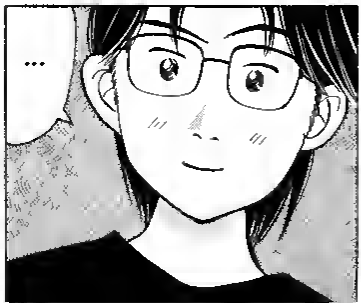




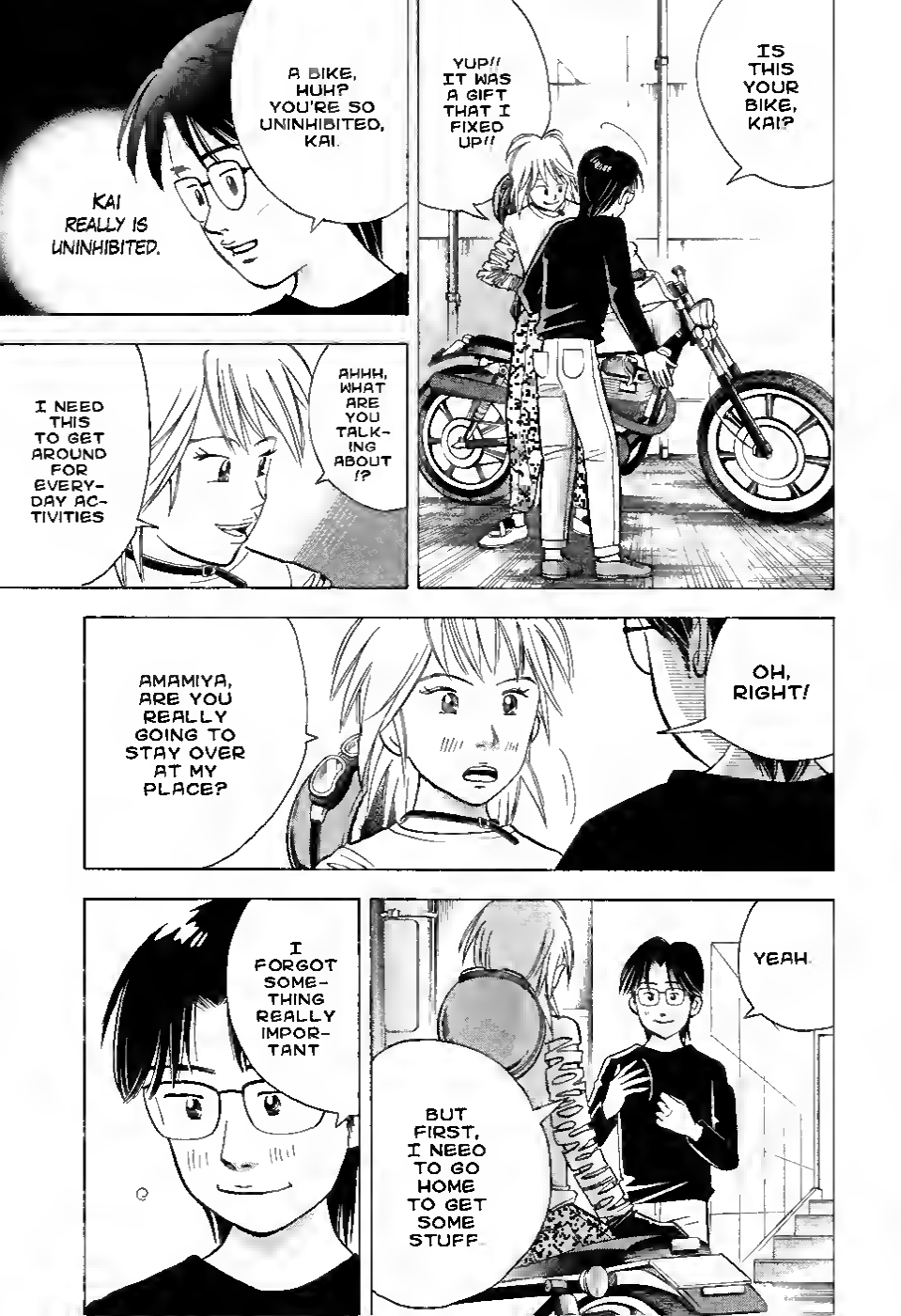
THROUGH A DREAM FOR THE BETTER PART OF THE DAY.

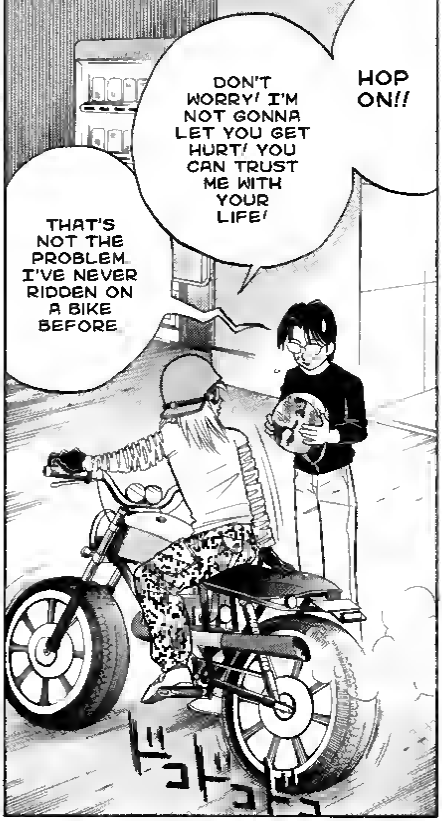

KAI!!

THAT SHOULD BE MY LINE
HAHA

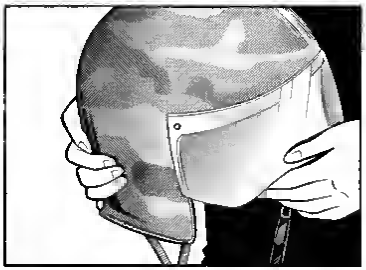

...

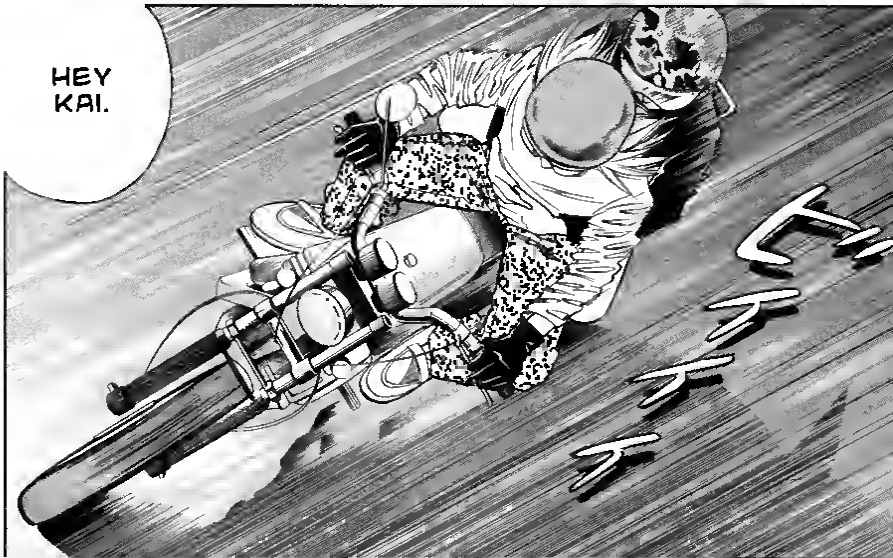
MUST HAVE BEEN TIRING.
HEY AMAMIYA.


A BIKE, HUH? YOU'RE SO UNINHIBITED, KAI.
KAI REALLY IS UNINHIBITED.
YUP!! IT WAS A GIFT THAT I FIXED UP!!
IS THIS YOUR BIKE, KAI?
I NEED THIS TO GET AROUND FOR EVERY-DAY AC-TIVITIES
AHHH, WHAT ARE YOU TALK-ING ABOUT!?
AMAMIYA, ARE YOU REALLY GOING TO STAY OVER AT MY PLACE?
OH, RIGHT!
I FORGOT SOME-THING REALLY IMPOR-TANT
BUT FIRST, I NEED TO GO HOME TO GET SOME STUFF
YEAH


HOP ON!!
DON'T WORRY! I'M NOT GONNA LET YOU GET HURT! YOU CAN TRUST ME WITH YOUR LIFE!
THAT'S NOT THE PROBLEM. I'VE NEVER RIDDEN ON A BIKE BEFORE

GOT IT.
FIRST STOP, YOUR HOUSE!



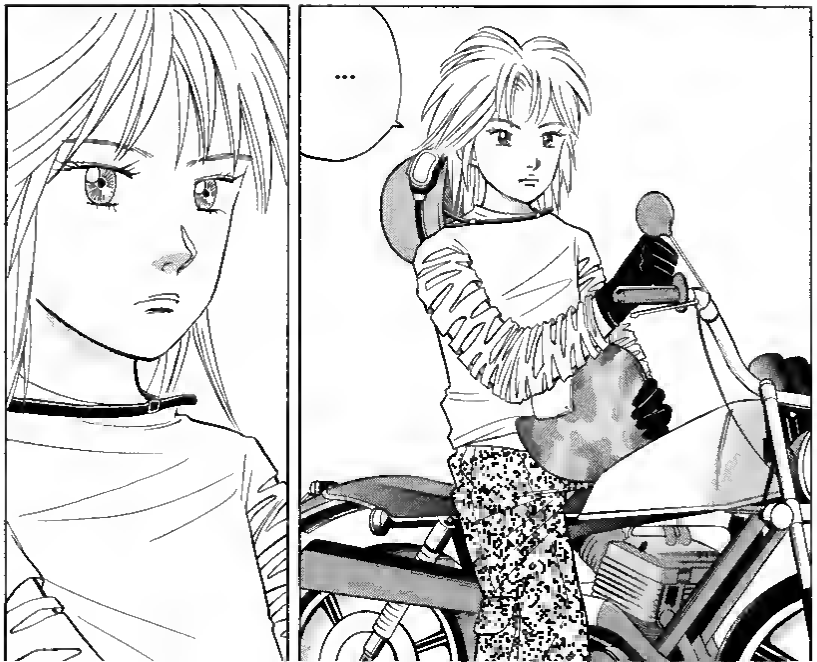

HEY KAI.

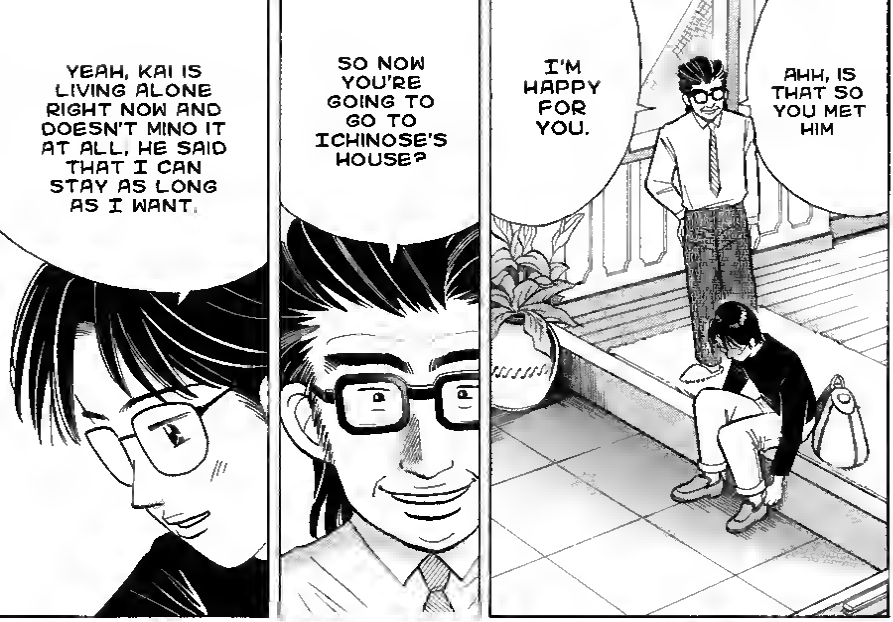
WHY AM I ALWAYS SO TIMID AND SUB-DUED?
WHAT HAVE THESE FIVE YEARS DONE FOR ME?
WHAT? I CAN'T HEAR YOU. ASK ME LATER!
HEY, KAI!?
HEY, KAI!?
OKAY! I WILL!

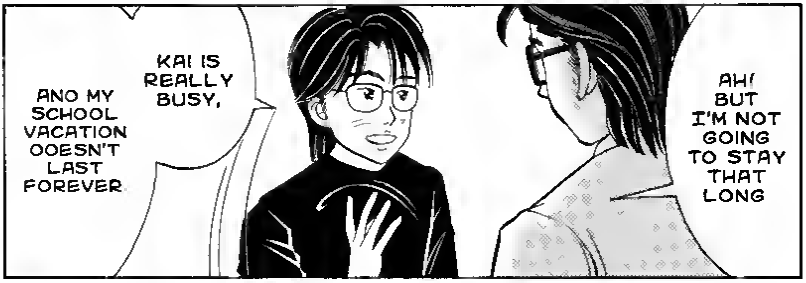
HAVE THESE LAST FIVE YEARS
BEEN USELESS FOR ME !?
ハレルヤ END

piano no mori
chapter 66
p n y x t r
barbapapa
Unproductive

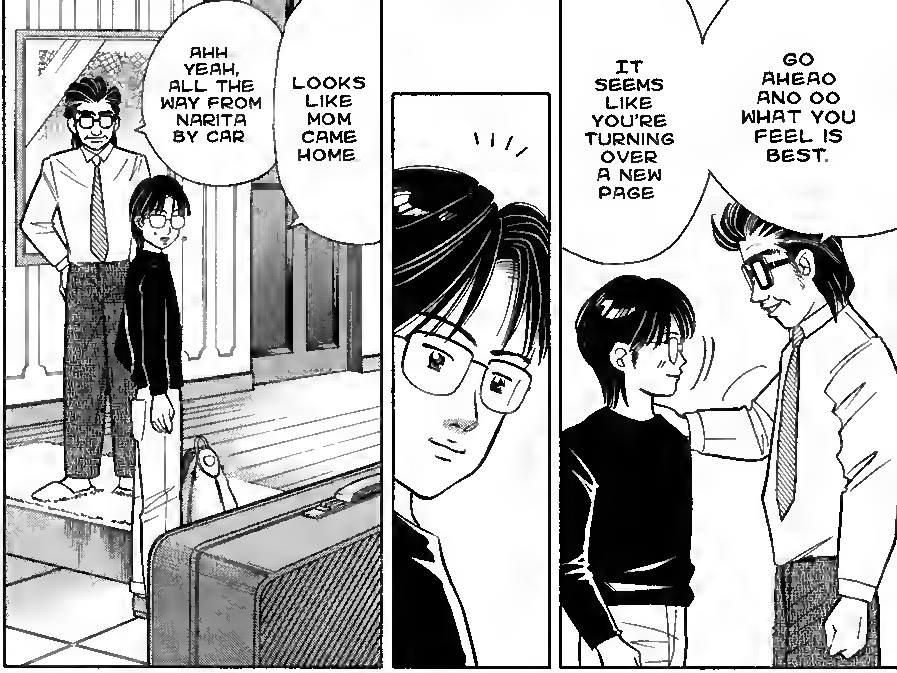
Chapter 66 Cross Road

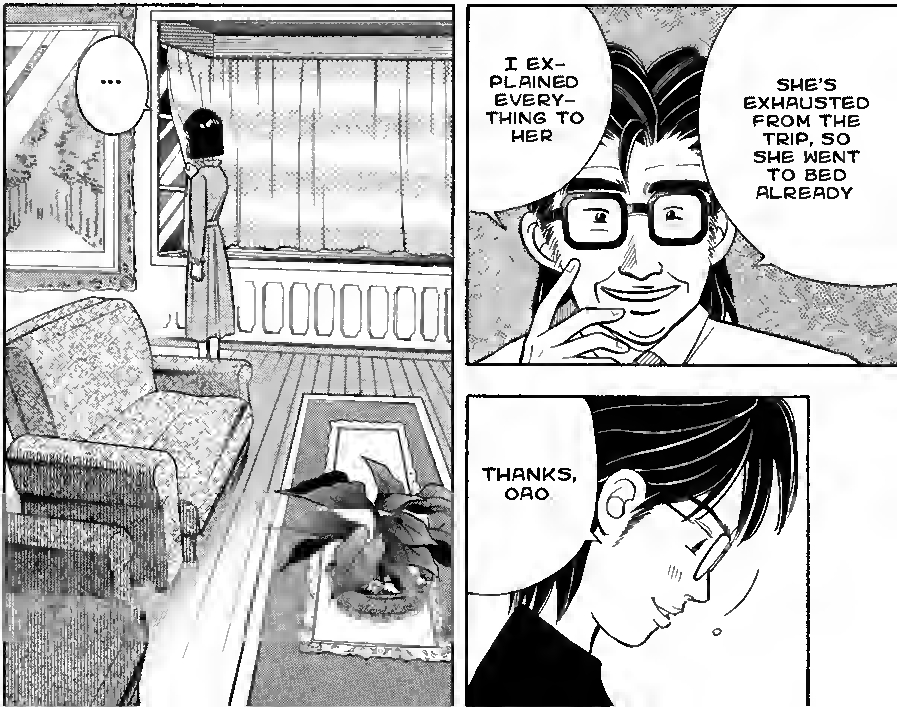



AHH, IS THAT SO YOU MET HIM
I'M HAPPY FOR YOU.
SO NOW YOU'RE GOING TO GO TO ICHINOSE'S HOUSE?
YEAH, KAI IS LIVING ALONE RIGHT NOW AND DOESN'T MIND IT AT ALL. HE SAID THAT I CAN STAY AS LONG AS I WANT.


AH! BUT I'M NOT GOING TO STAY THAT LONG
KAI IS REALLY BUSY,
AND MY SCHOOL VACATION DOESN'T LAST FOREVER

THEN AGAIN, AS LONG AS I CAN'T PLAY THE PIANO,
SCHOOL IS KIND OF MEANING-LESS.
OK.

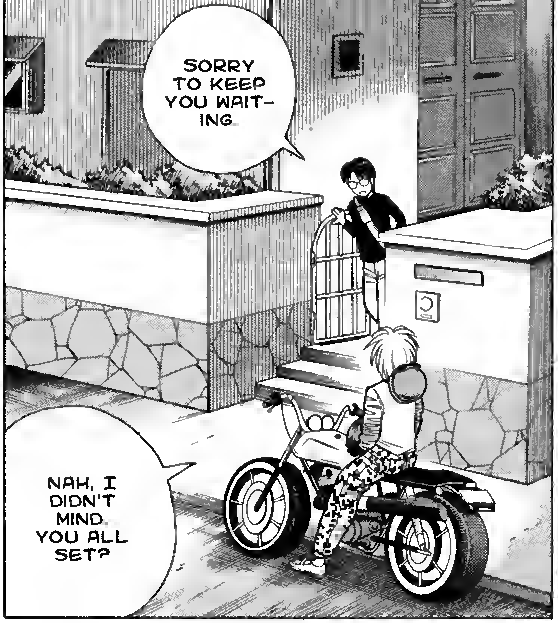

AHH YEAH, ALL THE WAY FROM NARITA BY CAR
LOOKS LIKE MOM CAME HOME
IT SEEMS LIKE YOU'RE TURNING OVER A NEW PAGE
GO AHEAD AND DO WHAT YOU FEEL IS BEST.

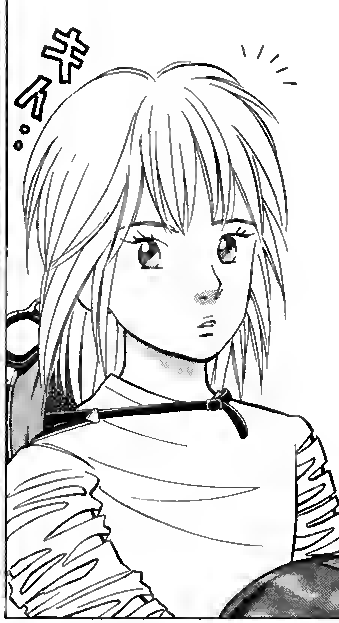

...
I EX-PLAINED EVERY-THING TO HER
SHE'S EXHAUSTED FROM THE TRIP, SO SHE WENT TO BED ALREADY
THANKS, DAD

I'M LEAV-ING.
OH!
KAI LET ME RIDE ON THE BACK OF HIS BIKE ON THE WAY HERE.
I ALWAYS THOUGHT IT WOULD BE REALLY SCARY, BUT IT WAS PRETTY EXCITING.

AHH, THAT'S NICE.
GOOD LUCK, SYUHEI!
DAD, I'M FINE NOW.
!

I'M NOT GOING TO RUN ANY-MORE
ANO REALLY, I CAN'T RUN AWAY
AS LONG AS I PLAY THE PIANO.
SYUHE!


SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAIT-ING.
NAH, I DIDN'T MIND. YOU ALL SET?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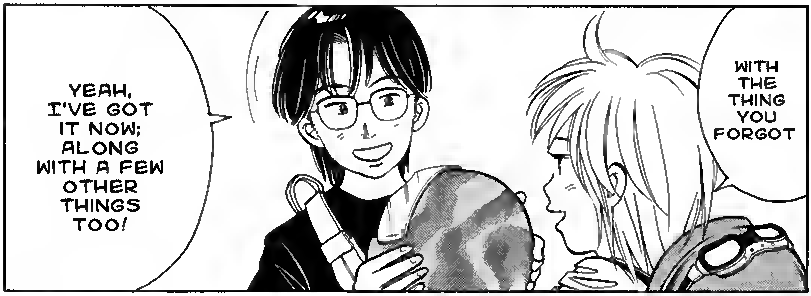
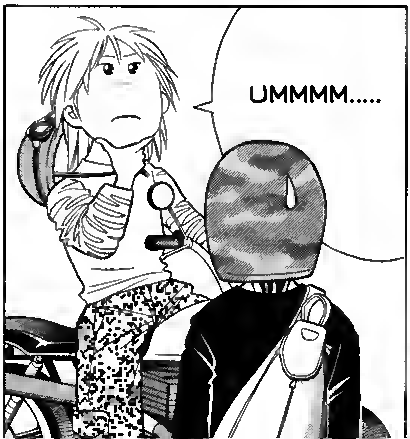
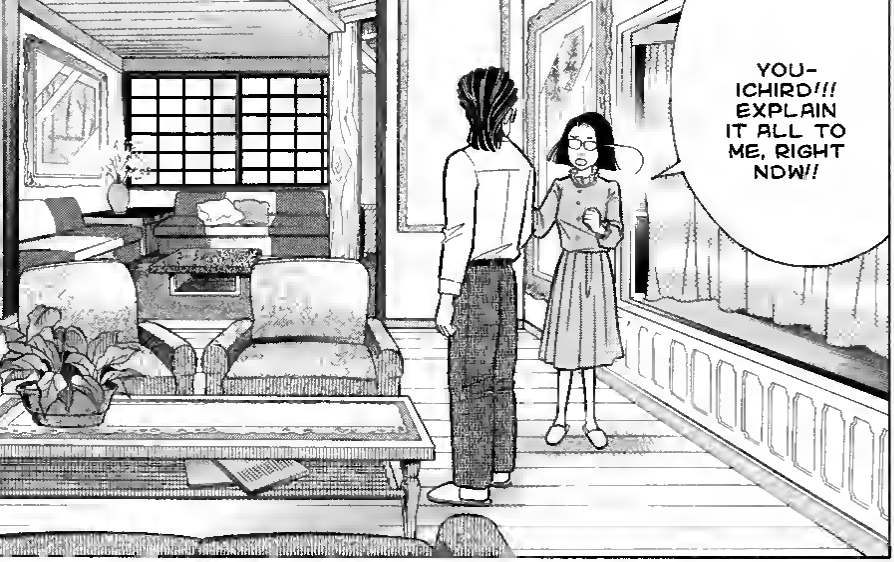

YEAH, I'VE GOT IT NOW; ALONG WITH A FEW OTHER THINGS TOO!
WITH THE THING YOU FORGOT


UMMMM.....

OH RIGHT! IS IT POSSIBLE TO WATCH VIDEOS AT YOUR PLACE?

IT'LL BE FINE! I'LL FIGURE OUT A WAY.
ドドドドド
HOW FRIGHTENING. I THINK I'M GOING TO BE SICK

I WOULD HAVE NEVER ALLOWED HIM TO DO SOMETHING AS RECK-LESS AS RIDING ON A BIKE
IF YOU HADN'T LEC-TURED ME THAT I HAVE TO CONTROL MYSELF, OR ELSE SYUHEI WON'T GET OUT OF HIS SLUMP
I WAS AFRAID THAT YOU MIGHT JUMP OUT AT ANY MOMENT AND TRY TO STOP HIM FROM LEAVING
HAHA, YOU REALLY HELD YOURSELF BACK
HE DOESN'T NEED TO EXPERIENCE PUTTING HIS LIFE AT RISK!!
OH, SHUSH YOU!!!
SYUHEI NEEDS TO EXPERIENCE ALL KINDS OF THINGS

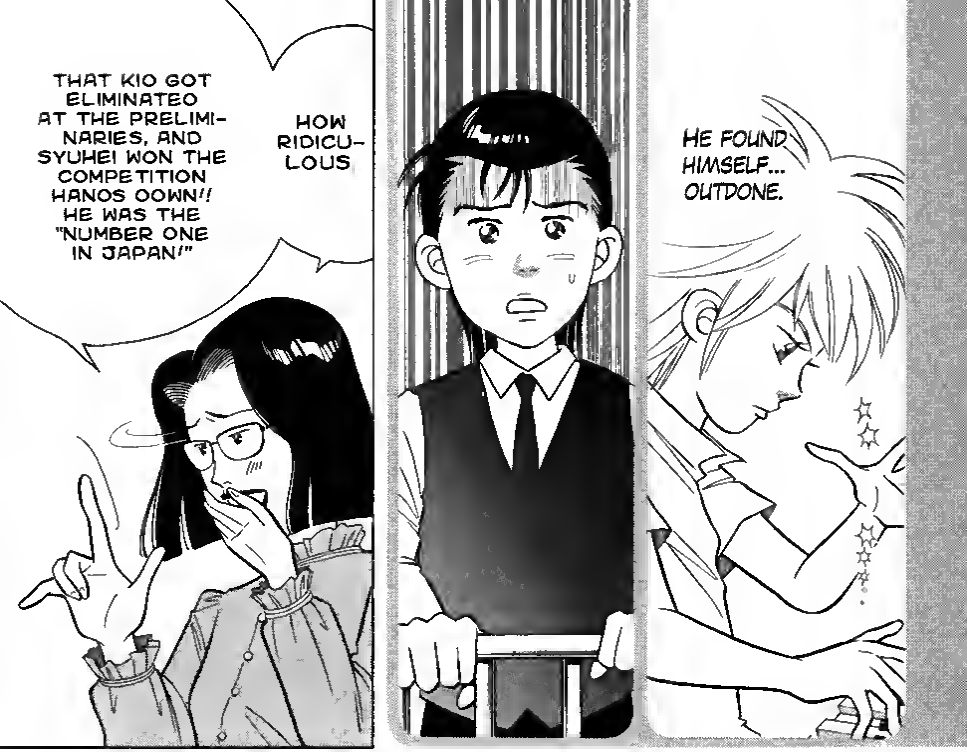

YOU-
ICHIRD!!!
EXPLAIN
IT ALL TO
ME, RIGHT
NDW!!

WHAT
CDNNECTIDN
DOES THAT
KID HAVE
WITH SYUHEI
NDT BEING
ABLE TD
PLAY THE
PIANO!!!?
WHY IS
SYUHEI SD
HUNG UP
ON THAT
KID CALLED
ICHINDSE
!?

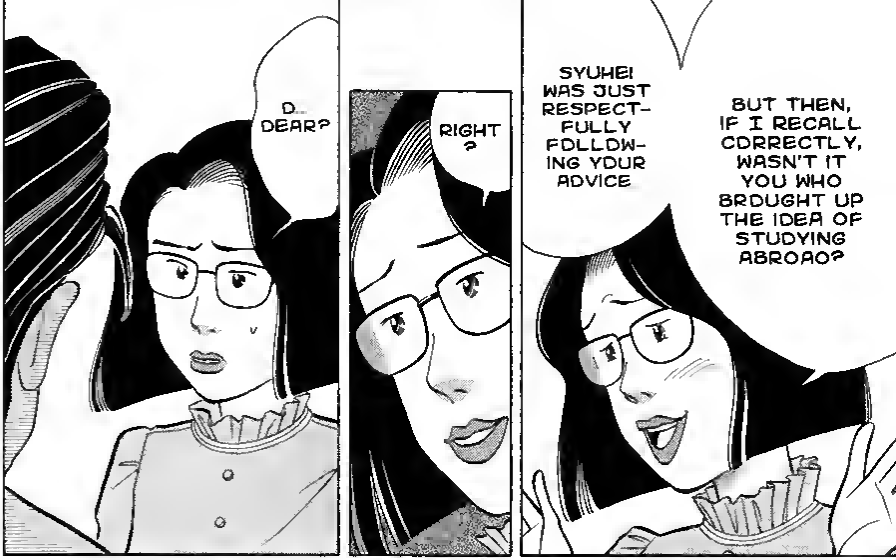
IT...
HERE I AM,
WORRIED SICK,
AND HE DOESN'T
TELL ME ANY-
THING... AND
YOU TDO...

I'M HIS
MOTHER
!!!
EX-
PLAIN
IT TO
ME!

IT BEGAN FIVE YEARS AGO.
SYUHEI RAN AWAY FROM YOUNG ICHINOSE BACK THEN.
HUH? WHAT DD YOU MEAN BY THAT?
FIVE YEARS AGO,
AT THE REGIONAL SELECTION COMPETI-TION FOR THE "JAPAN NATIONWIDE STUDENT PIANO CON-COURS"
全日本学生ピアノコンクール
SYUHEI HEARD ICHINOSE'S PIANO.
AND WAS LEFT AT A COMPLETE LOSS FOR AN ANSWER.

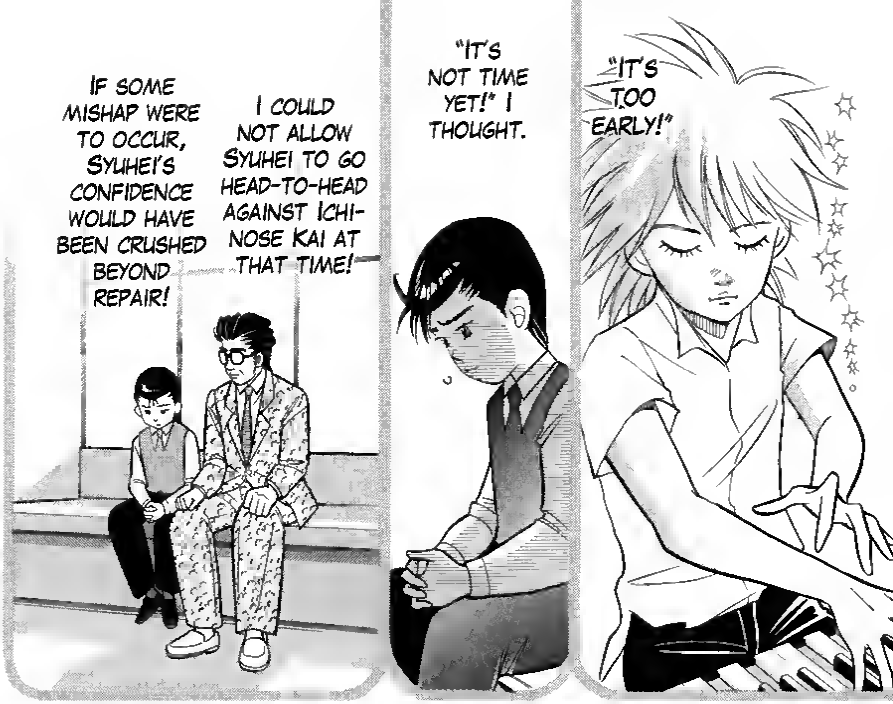

THAT KIO GOT ELIMINATED AT THE PRELIMINARIES, AND SYUHEI WON THE COMPETITION HANDS DOWN!! HE WAS THE "NUMBER ONE IN JAPAN!"
HOW RIDICULOUS
HE FOUND HIMSELF... OUTDONE.

THAT'S RIGHT.
HAHA YOU MEAN TO SAY THAT, SYUHEI GOING ABROAD TO STUDY WAS JUST TO RUN AWAY?
SYUHEI KNEW THE TRUE SCORE IN HIS OWN HEART
THAT RESULT DOESN'T MATTER

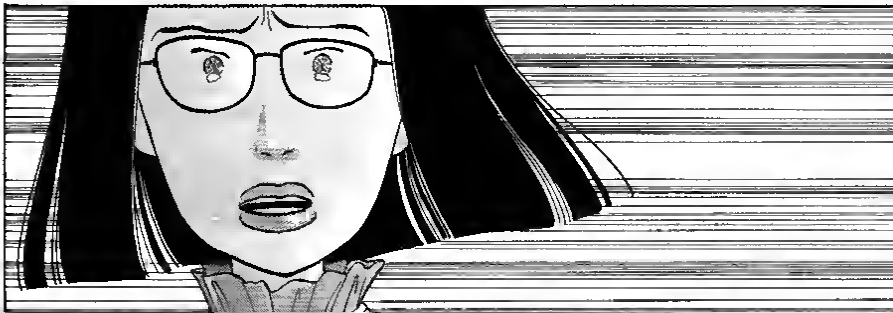

D... DEAR?
RIGHT?
SYUHEI WAS JUST RESPECT-FULLY FOLLOW-ING YOUR ADVICE
BUT THEN, IF I RECALL CORRECTLY, WASN'T IT YOU WHO BROUGHT UP THE IDEA OF STUDYING ABROAD?

WHAT?
I WAS TRYING TO FIND A REFUGE FROM ICHINOSE KAI, FOR SYUHEI.
THAT'S RIGHT.

I CONSIDERED ICHINOSE KAI A SERIOUS THREAT.
YOU-ICHIRO.
HE IS NOT SOMEONE YOU CAN MATCH WITH JUST EXPERI-ENCE AND PRACTICE.
HE IS TALENTED BEYOND COMPRE-HENSION.

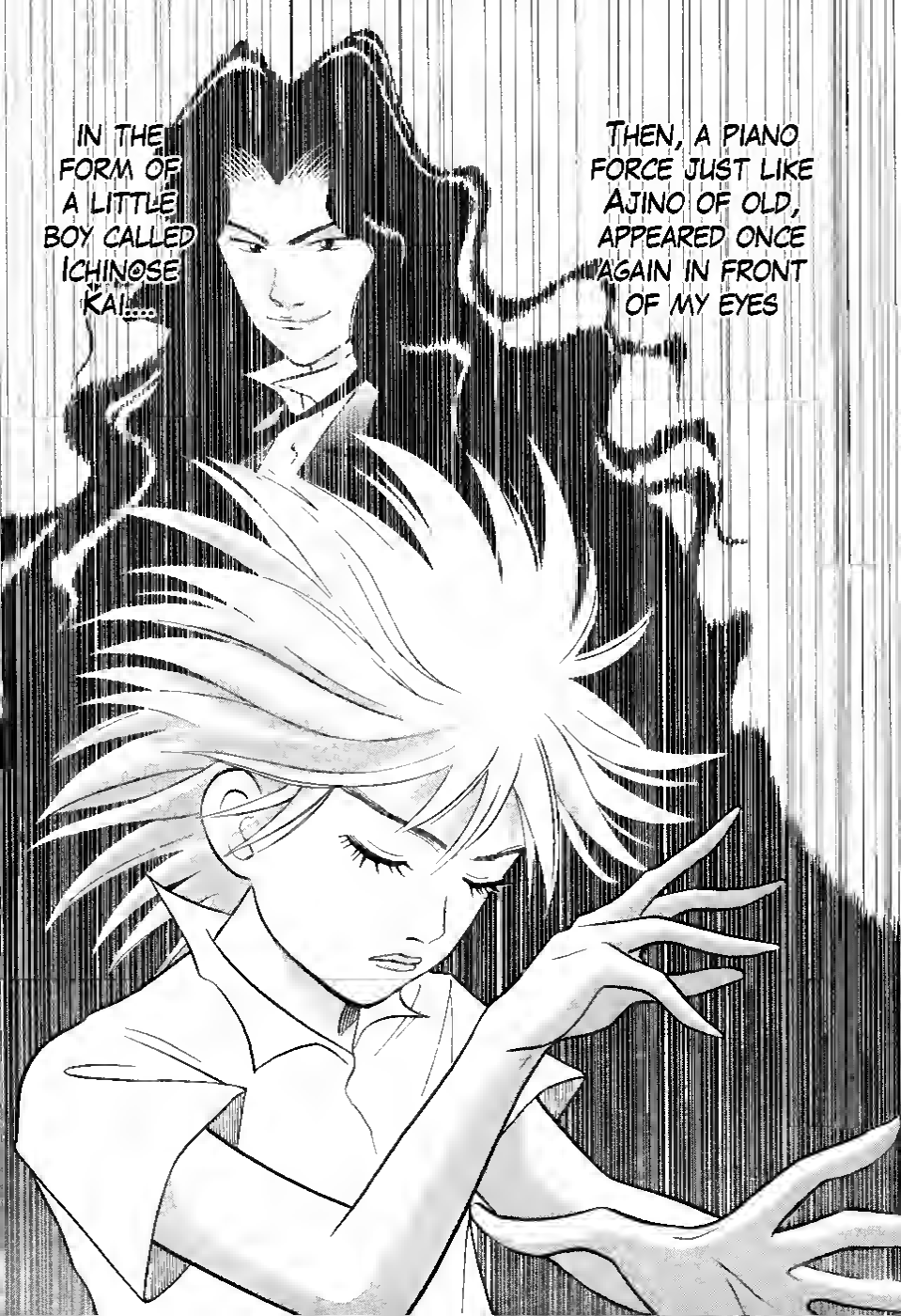

"IT'S TOO EARLY!"
"IT'S NOT TIME YET!" I THOUGHT.
I COULD NOT ALLOW SYUHEI TO GO HEAD-TO-HEAD AGAINST ICHINOSE KAI AT THAT TIME!
IF SOME MISHAP WERE TO OCCUR, SYUHEI'S CONFIDENCE WOULD HAVE BEEN CRUSHED BEYOND REPAIR!

SO I USED THE IDEA OF "STUDYING ABROAD" TO SHIELD HIM,
AND TO HAVE HIM RUN AWAY.
OF COURSE, IT WAS JUST A TEMPORARY REFUGE.



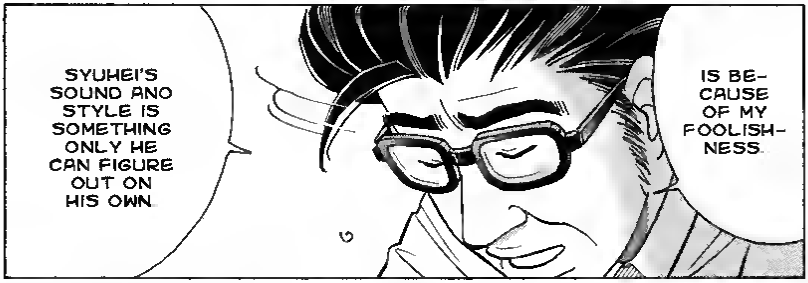
YOU TOO, HAVE TO GO OUT INTO THE WIDER WORLD!
IF YOU WANT TO CHALLENGE HIM...
AS LONG AS AJINO SOUSUKE WAS AROUND
ICHINOSE KAI WOULD REAPPEAR IN THE PIANO WORLD SOONER OR LATER
WAS I SO SCARED OF...?
BUT WHAT

...WHEN I THINK ABOUT IT... AJINO AND I WERE BOTH IN HIGH SCHOOL WHEN I FIRST DISCOVERED HIS PIANO.
LOVE, ADMIRATION, ENVY, AND JEALOUSY. I JUMPED BETWEEN ALL THOSE EMOTIONS;
AND TOILED WITHOUT END, TRYING TO CHASE DOWN HIS PIANO.
THE RIVAL THAT I HADN'T BEATEN ONCE, WAS GONE JUST LIKE THAT.
THEN ALL OF A SUDDEN, THE AJINO SOUSLIKE WHO I WAS CHASING AFTER, DISAPPEARED IN THAT UNFORTUNATE ACCIDENT.

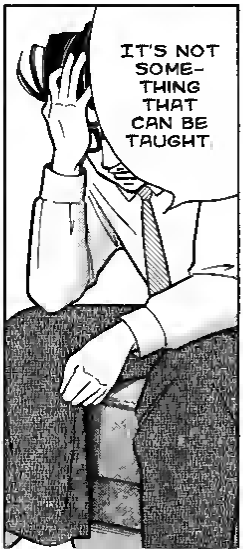

IN THE FORM OF A LITTLE BOY CALLED ICHINOSE KAI....
THEN, A PIANO FORCE JUST LIKE AJINO OF OLD, APPEARED ONCE AGAIN IN FRONT OF MY EYES

TO DEATH.
I WAS SCARED
IT WASN'T SYUHEI WHO WAS RUNNING AWAY.
BEHIND ICHINOSE KAI.
I WAS TREMBLING AT THE SHADOW OF AJINO SOUSUKE,
IT WAS ME.

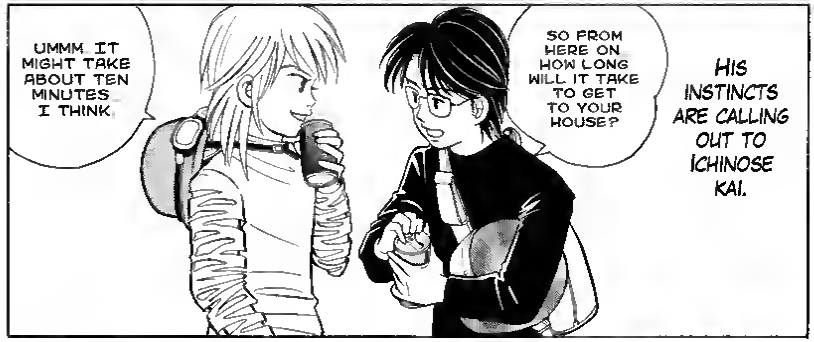
THE REASON WHY SYUHEI CAN'T PLAY THE PIANO IS
THEN, THEN
DROVE SYUHEI INTO HIS SLUMP
ME, MY OWN WEAKNESS, MY NAIVETY,


SYUHEI'S SOUND AND STYLE IS SOMETHING ONLY HE CAN FIGURE OUT ON HIS OWN.
IS BECAUSE OF MY FOOLISHNESS.

HE ALSO WANTED TO COMPETE WITH ICHINOSE, REGARDLESS OF THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS THAT HE WOULD HAVE TO ENDURE...
... YET ON THE OTHER HAND...
FIVE YEARS AGO... SYUHEI DID YEARN TO GET AWAY FROM ICHINOSE.

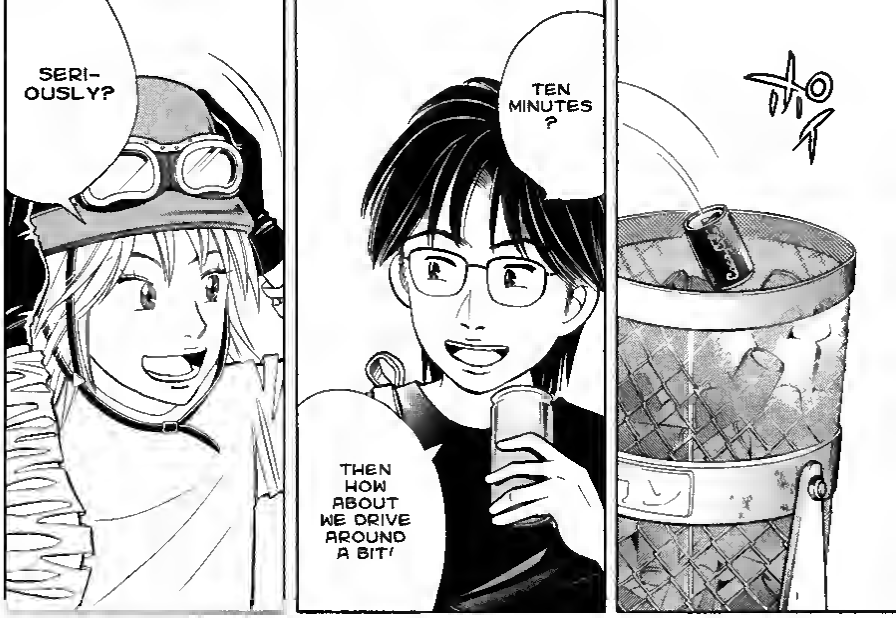

IT'S NOT SOMETHING THAT CAN BE TAUGHT.

AND, HERE AND NOW...
ガラガラ
ガチャン
ちゃりん
ちゃりん


UMMM. IT MIGHT TAKE ABOUT TEN MINUTES I THINK.
SO FROM HERE ON HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE TO GET TO YOUR HOUSE?
HIS INSTINCTS ARE CALLING OUT TO ICHINOSE KAI.

"AND REALLY, I CAN'T RUN AWAY"
HUH?
SYUHEI TOLD ME, "I AM NOT GOING TO RUN ANY-MORE."
NAMIE

AS LONG AS I PLAY THE PIANO.
SYUHEI ...
BECAUSE KAI ISN'T CHASING AFTER ME.
KAI WILL ALWAYS BE IN THE LEAD, RUNNING AHEAD OF ME.
Aha...

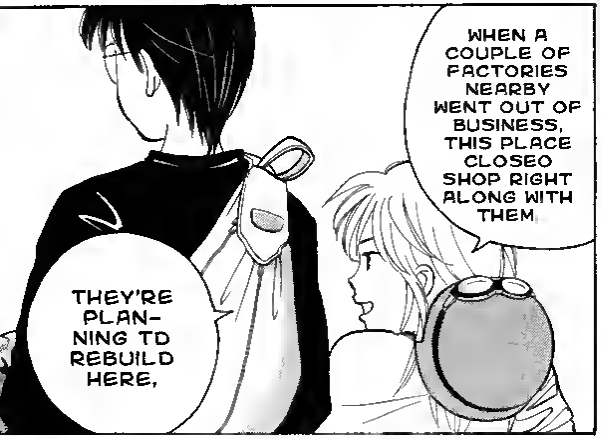

SERI-
OUSLY?
TEN
MINUTES
?
THEN
HOW
ABOUT
WE DRIVE
AROUND
A BIT!

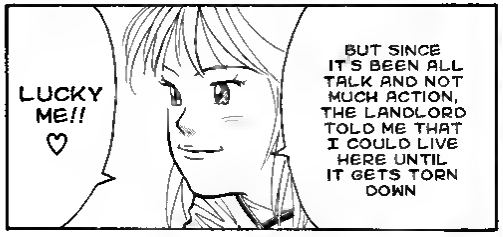
OTHERWISE...
I WON'T BE
ABLE TO SEE
WHERE HE'LL
BE GOING!
AMAMIYA,
YOU GOTTA
GET YOUR
OWN MO-
TORCYCLE
LICENSE!!
A
BIKE?
ME?
FATHER, I WILL
OPEN MY EYES
AND LOOK
DIRECTLY
AT KAI!
CROSS ROAD END

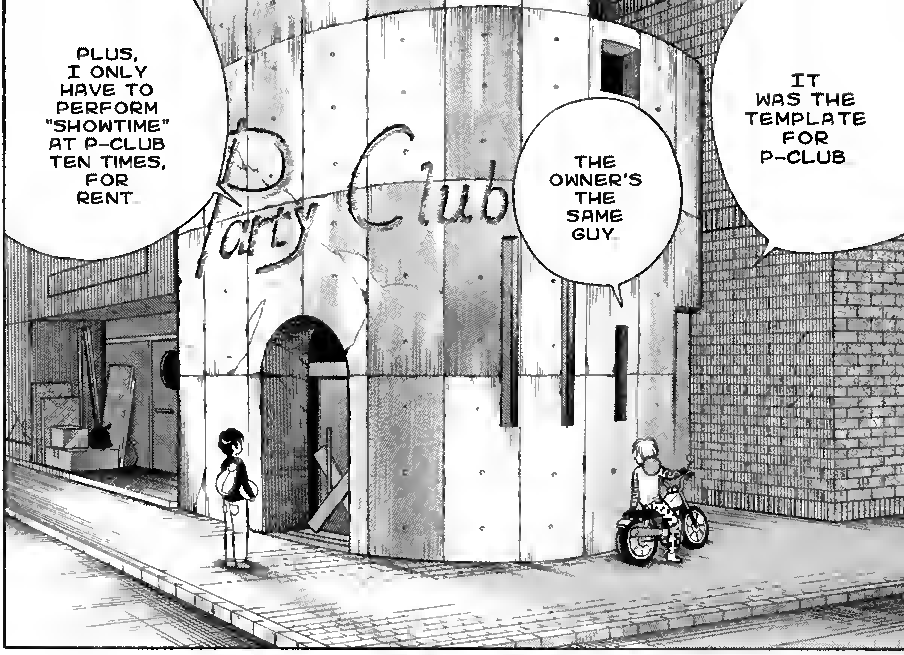
piano no mori
chapter 67
p n y x t r
barbapapa
Unproductive

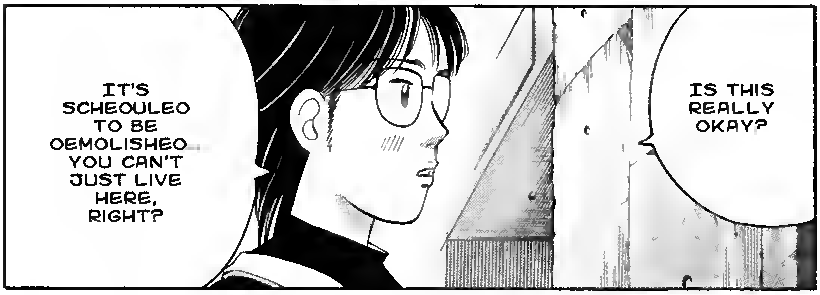
THIS...
HUH?
THIS IS MY PLACE!
YEP.
BUT, ISN'T THIS
party

Chapter 67 My Place


WHEN A COUPLE OF FACTORIES NEARBY WENT OUT OF BUSINESS, THIS PLACE CLOSED SHOP RIGHT ALONG WITH THEM.
THEY'RE PLANNING TO REBUILD HERE,



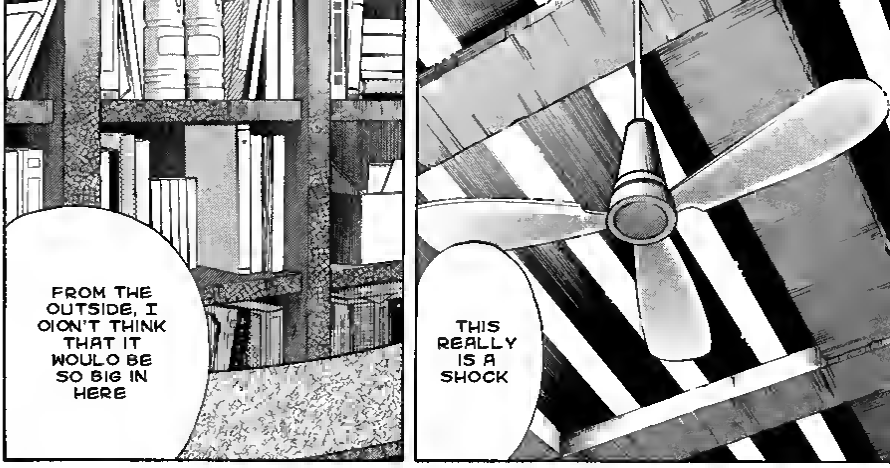

PLUS, I ONLY HAVE TO PERFORM "SHOWTIME" AT P-CLUB TEN TIMES, FOR RENT.
P-Party Club
THE OWNER'S THE SAME GUY.
IT WAS THE TEMPLATE FOR P-CLUB.

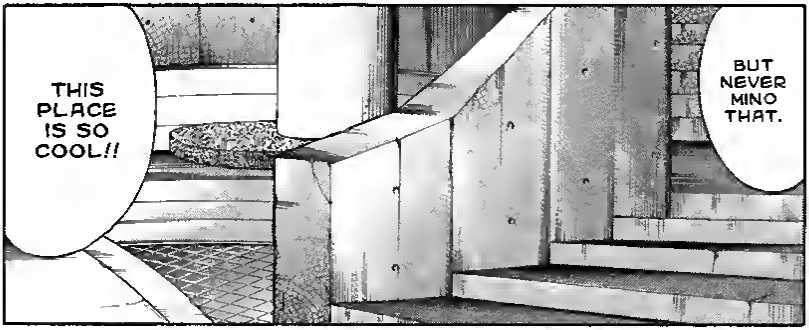

IT'S SCHEDULED TO BE DEMOLISHED. YOU CAN'T JUST LIVE HERE, RIGHT?
IS THIS REALLY OKAY?

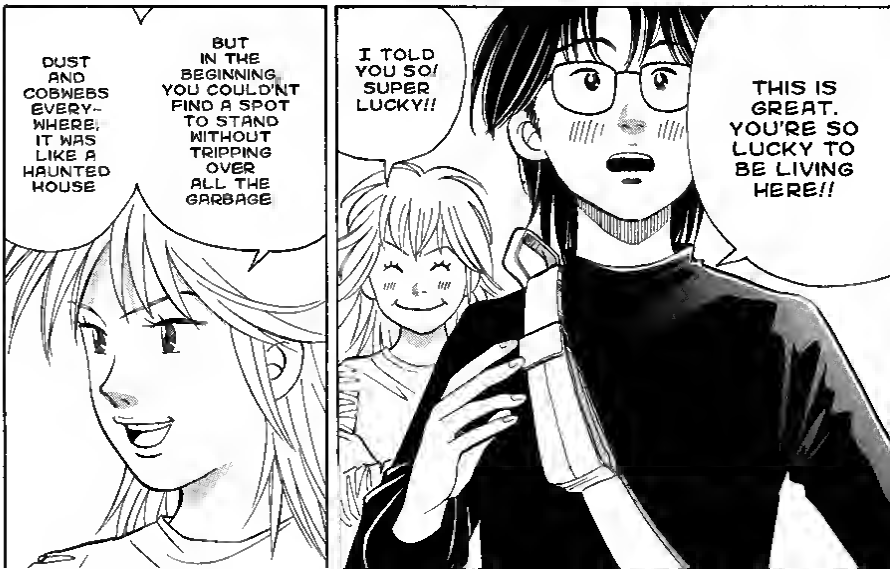
COME, I'LL SHOW YOU AROUND. IT'S THE PERFECT BACHELOR PAD!! LIKE MY OWN CASTLE!
YOU CAN LIVE HERE, ALRIGHT? I MEAN, I'M LIVING HERE RIGHT NOW!
HEY, DON'T TALK LIKE THAT ABOUT MY PLACE!

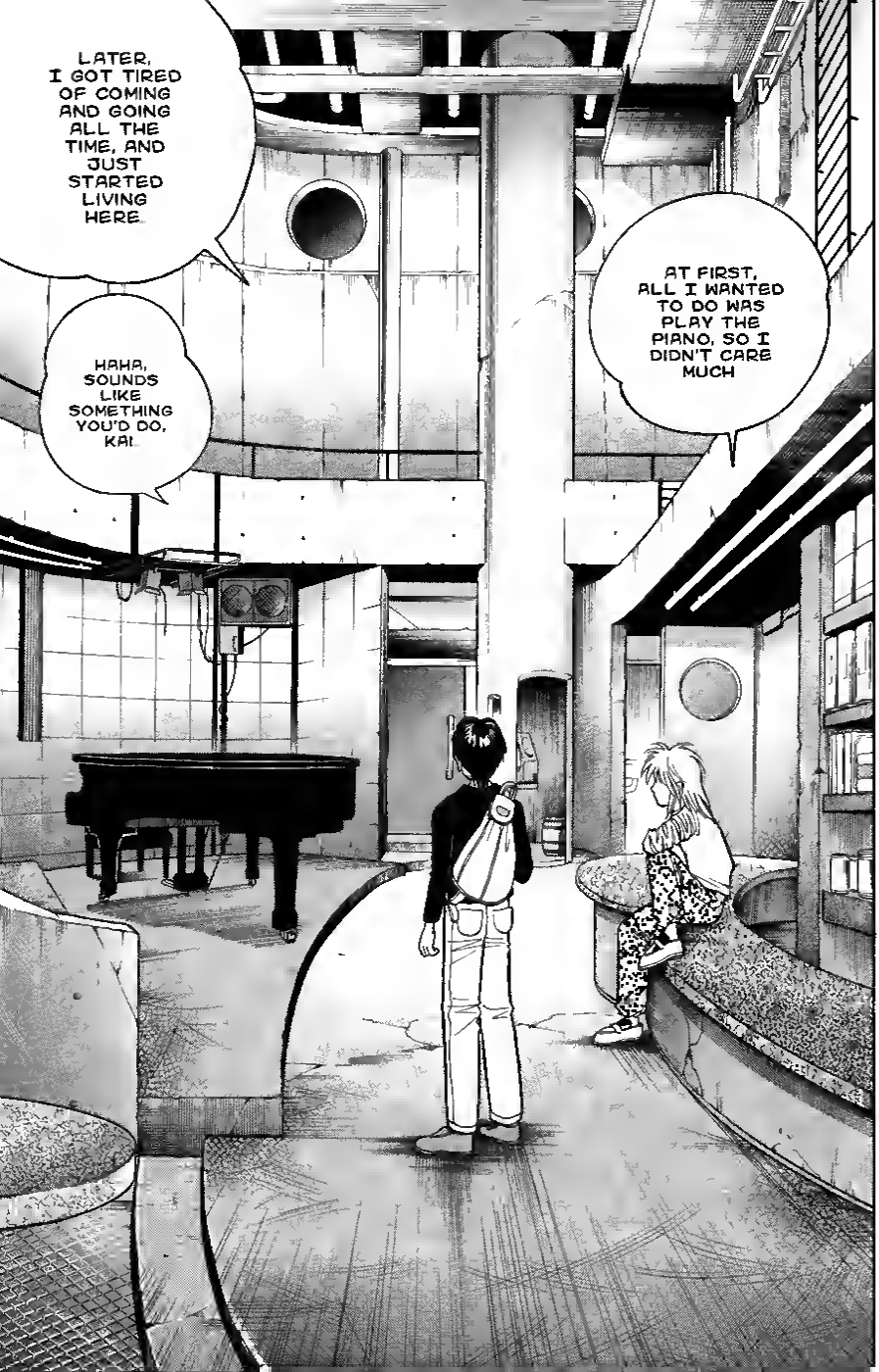
関係者以外の立ち入りを禁ず
IT'S DARK, SO WATCH YOUR STEP.
AHAHA, I'M ALWAYS IN FOR A SHOCK WITH YOU, KAI.
関係者以外の立ち入りを禁ず
YOU'RE IN FOR A SHOCK, AMAMIYA!
カチッ

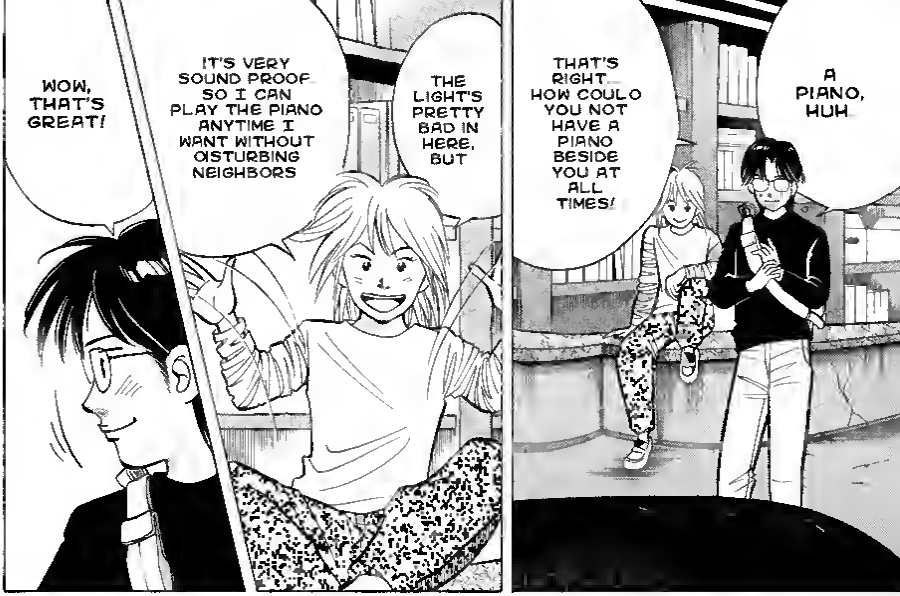
WOW!
RIGHT ?
WHAT DID I TELL YOU!

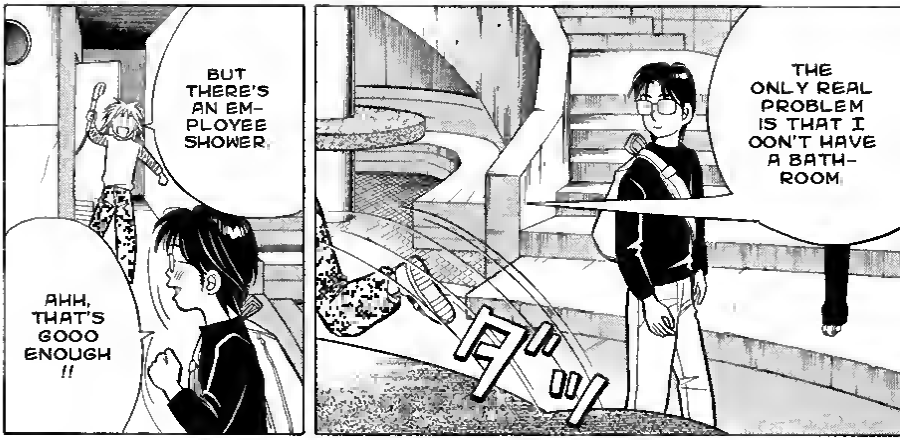

FROM THE OUTSIDE, I DION'T THINK THAT IT WOULD BE SO BIG IN HERE
THIS REALLY IS A SHOCK

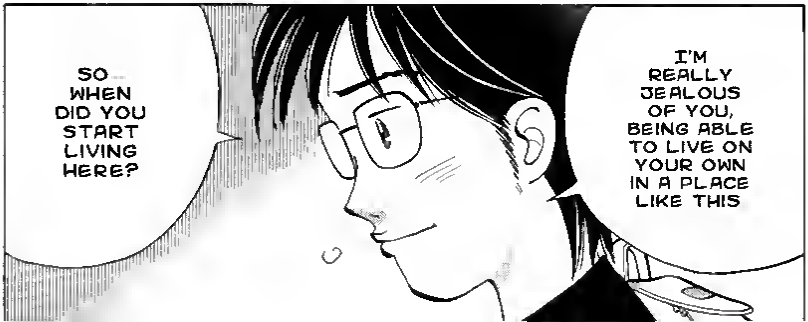

THIS PLACE IS SO COOL!!
BUT NEVER MIND THAT.


DUST AND COBWEBS EVERY-WHERE, IT WAS LIKE A HAUNTED HOUSE
BUT IN THE BEGINNING YOU COULD'NT FIND A SPOT TO STAND WITHOUT TRIPPING OVER ALL THE GARBAGE
I TOLD YOU SO! SUPER LUCKY!!
THIS IS GREAT. YOU'RE SO LUCKY TO BE LIVING HERE!!

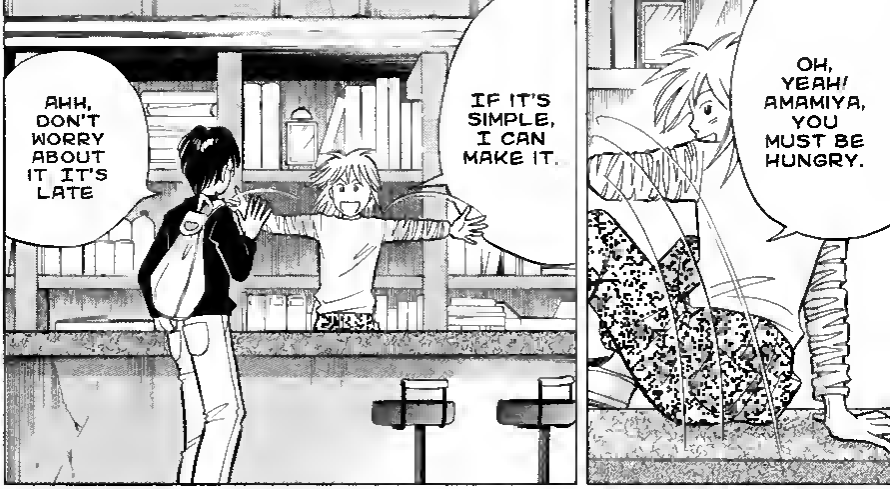

LATER, I GOT TIRED OF COMING AND GOING ALL THE TIME, AND JUST STARTED LIVING HERE.
AT FIRST, ALL I WANTED TO DO WAS PLAY THE PIANO, SO I DIDN'T CARE MUCH
HAHA, SOUNDS LIKE SOMETHING YOU'D DO, KAI.

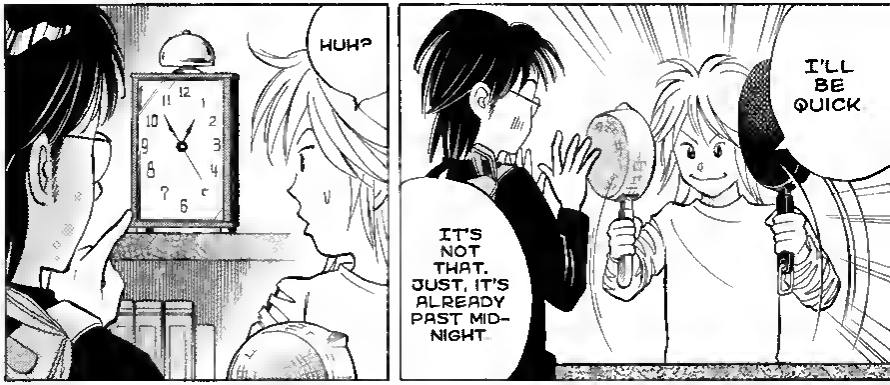

WOW, THAT'S GREAT!
IT'S VERY SOUND PROOF SO I CAN PLAY THE PIANO ANYTIME I WANT WITHOUT DISTURBING NEIGHBORS
THE LIGHT'S PRETTY BAD IN HERE, BUT
THAT'S RIGHT... HOW COULD YOU NOT HAVE A PIANO BESIDE YOU AT ALL TIMES!
A PIANO, HUH...

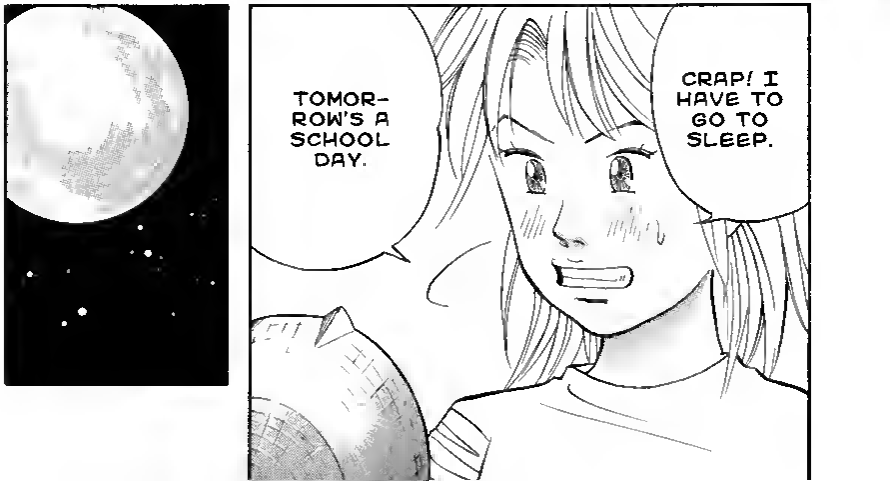

BUT THERE'S AN EMPLOYEE SHOWER.
AHH, THAT'S GOOD ENOUGH!!
THE ONLY REAL PROBLEM IS THAT I DON'T HAVE A BATHROOM.
ガ"ooo

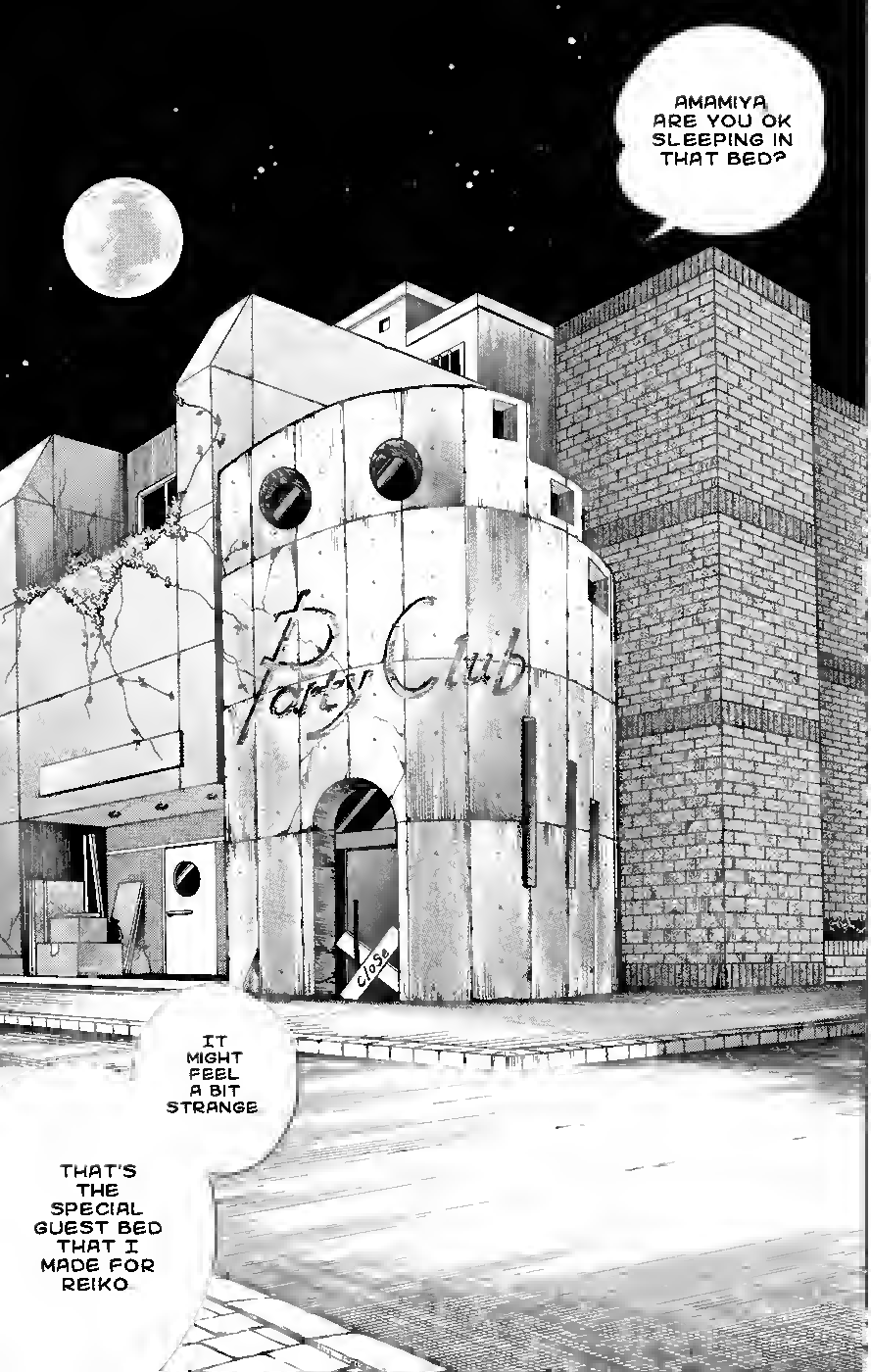

SO... WHEN DID YOU START LIVING HERE?
I'M REALLY JEALOUS OF YOU, BEING ABLE TO LIVE ON YOUR OWN IN A PLACE LIKE THIS

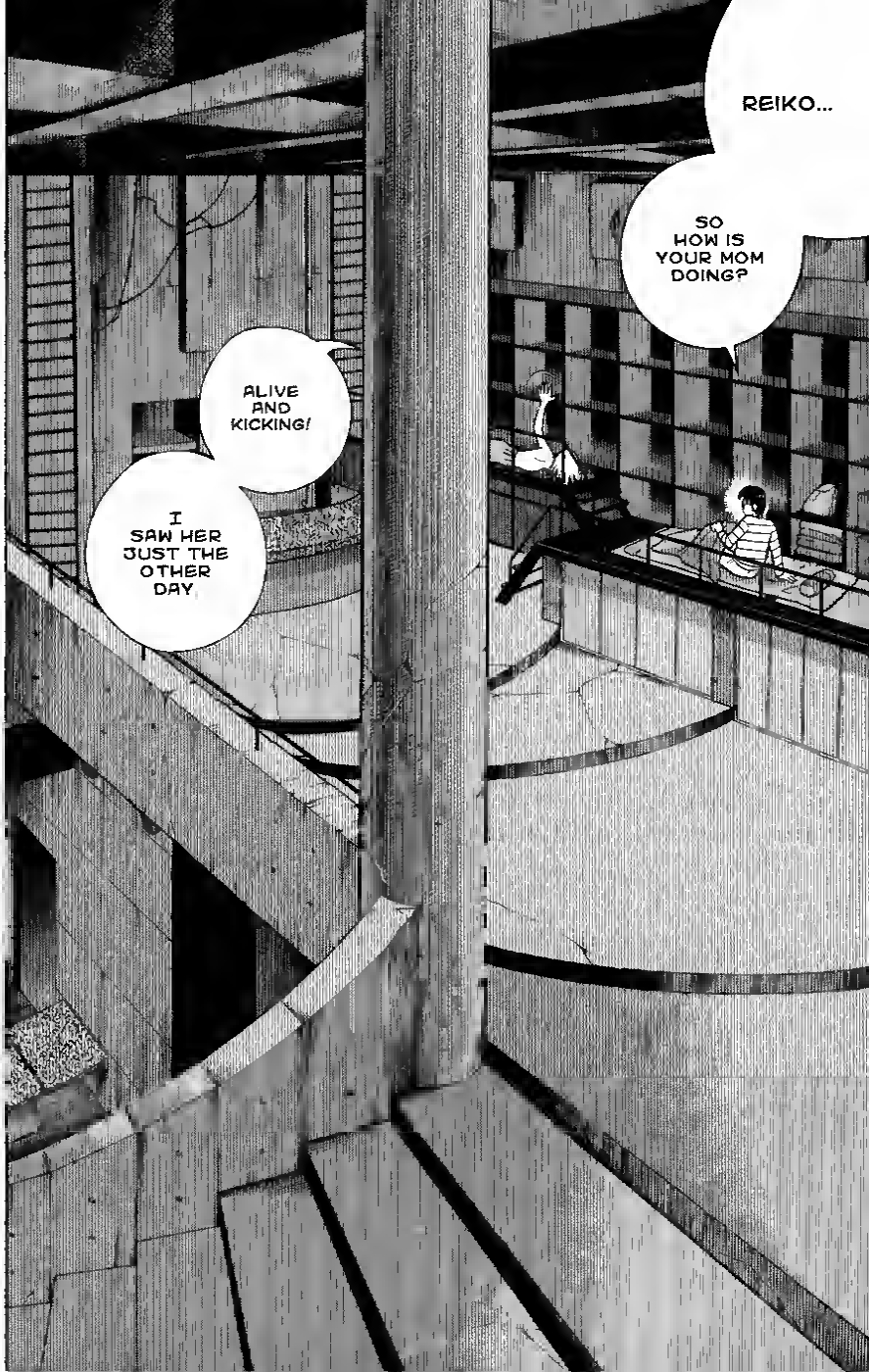
SECONO YEAR OF MIOOLE SCHOOL... WHY, YOU WERE STILL JUST A KIO!
REALLY? I HAVEN'T CHANGEO ALL THAT MUCH SINCE THEN.
OURING MY SECONO YEAR OF MIOOLE SCHOOL...
ABOUT TWO YEARS AGO.
...S...
OH, SECONO YEAR OF...
I'LL MAKE SOMETHING MYSELF OR SOMETIMES I EAT AT WORK
OH I'LL EAT WHAT-EVER.
EAT WHAT-EVER... WHAT CAN YOU COOK?
SO WHAT OO YOU OO ABOUT FOOO?
AHHH, BUT YOU KNOW, I COULON'T GET MY MOTORCYCLE LICENSE BACK THEN, SO I HAO TO GO EVERYWHERE BY BICYCLE
Check my calves. They're huge!


AHH, DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. IT'S LATE
IF IT'S SIMPLE, I CAN MAKE IT.
OH, YEAH! AMAMIYA, YOU MUST BE HUNGRY.

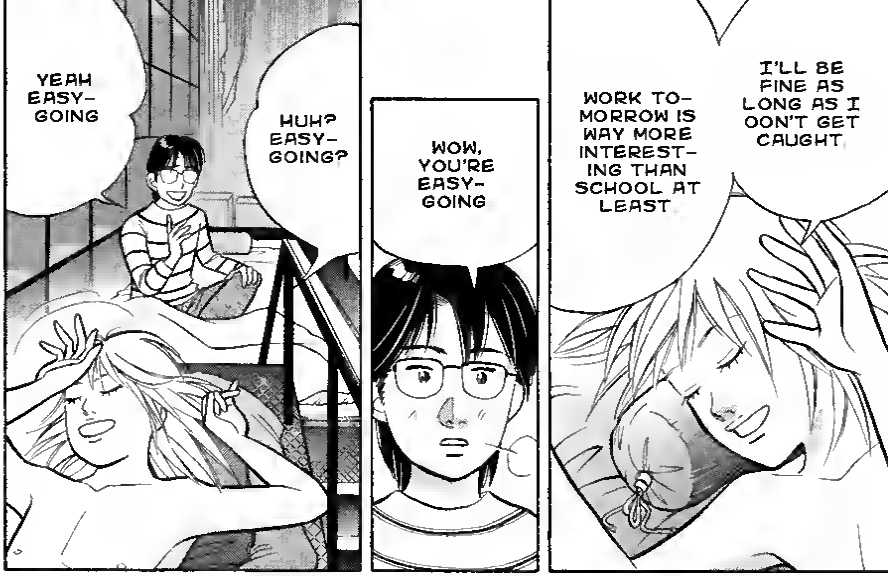

HUH?
IT'S NOT THAT. JUST, IT'S ALREADY PAST MIDNIGHT
I'LL BE QUICK

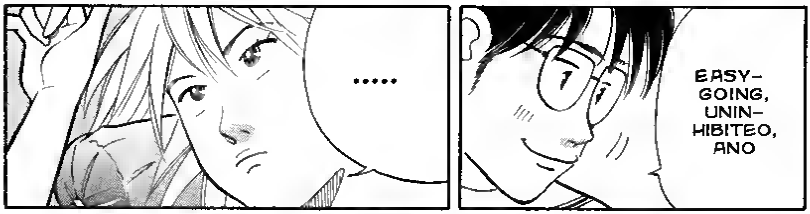

TOMORROW'S A SCHOOL DAY.
CRAP! I HAVE TO GO TO SLEEP.


AMAMIYA ARE YOU OK SLEEPING IN THAT BED?
Party Club
Close
IT MIGHT FEEL A BIT STRANGE
THAT'S THE SPECIAL GUEST BED THAT I MADE FOR REIKO


REIKO...
SO HOW IS YOUR MOM DOING?
ALIVE AND KICKING!
I SAW HER JUST THE OTHER DAY

AHH, RIGHT.
TOMORROW, I'LL BE HEADING TO SCHOOL AFTER PLAYING THE PIANO
I HAVE WORK IN THE AFTERNOON
I'LL BE BACK BY NOON
BUT YOU CAN SLEEP AS LONG AS YOU WANT
YOUR SCHOOL PROHIBITS WORK, RIGHT?
CAN YOU DO THAT?
WORK ...?

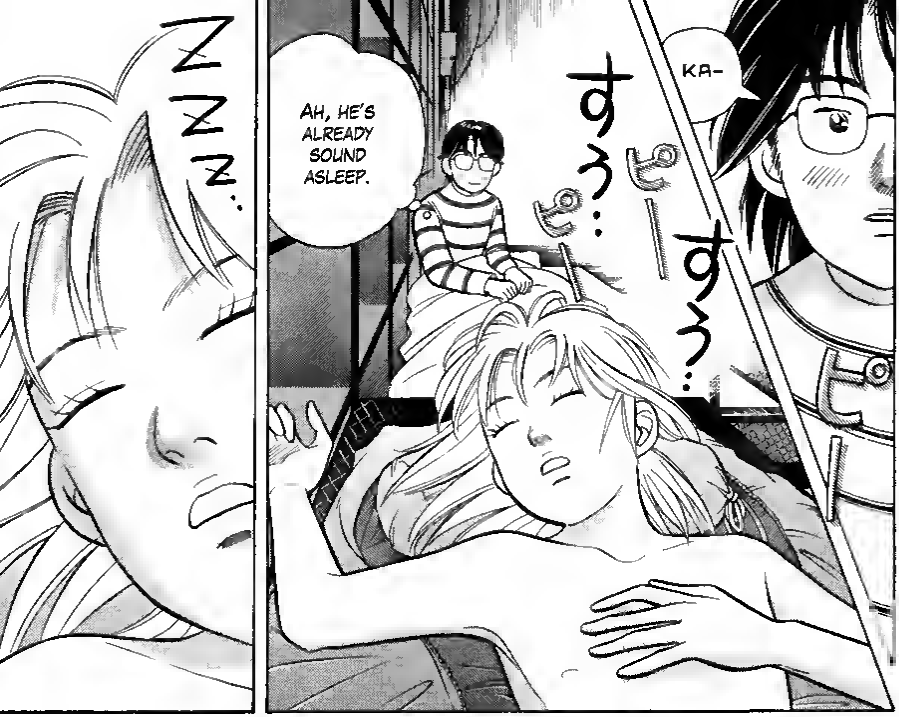

YEAH EASY-GOING
HUH? EASY-GOING?
WOW, YOU'RE EASY-GOING
WORK TO-MORROW IS WAY MORE INTEREST-ING THAN SCHOOL AT LEAST
I'LL BE FINE AS LONG AS I OON'T GET CAUGHT

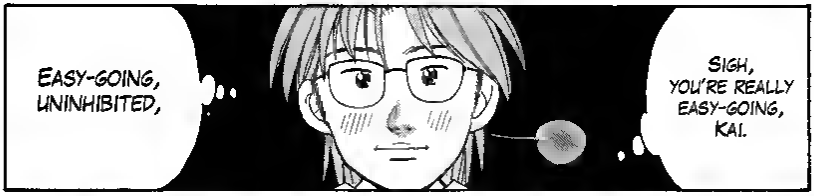

.....
EASY-GOING, UNIN-HIBITED, ANO

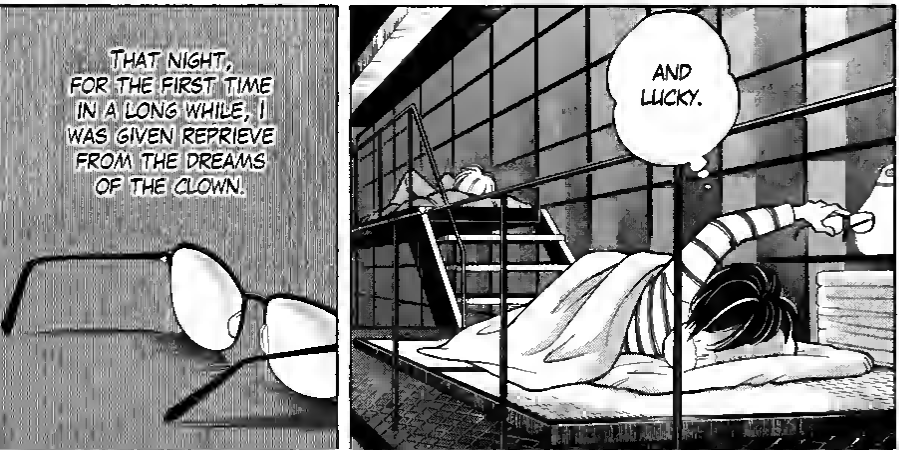
LUCKY?
YEAH, THAT.

REALLY ?
AHA-HAHA
I'M REALLY JEAL-OUS OF YOU
LIVING ALONE AND IN-DEPEN-DENTLY
HOW HARD YOU WORKED TO GET INTO THAT ELITE SCHOOL
BEN TOLD ME ALL ABOUT IT
YEAH, THERE'S JUST NO OTHER WAY
BUT
WHEN I HEARD HOW MUCH EFFORT YOU WERE PUTTING IN
I WAS REALLY RELIEVED
I HAVE TO WORK REALLY HARD.

IT WOULD HAVE LEFT ME WITHOUT A SINGLE LEG TO STAND ON.
IF YOU JUST SAILED RIGHT AHEAD OF ME BASED ON TALENT ALONE, AS SOMEONE WHO ONLY PROGRESSES BY PRACTIC- ING DAY AFTER DAY,
BUT DON'T YOU THINK YOU SHOULD BE MORE CARE- FUL... WORKING SO HARD TO GET INTO THAT SCHOOL, AND SEEING ALL THE PEOPLE AROUND YOU SO MOTIVATED NOT TO DIVULGE ANYTHING.
KAI, YOU MIGHT THINK I'M BUTTING INTO YOUR BUSINESS,
KAI...?
YOUR IDENTITY...

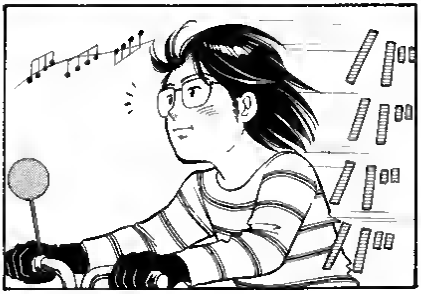

KA-
すぅ…すぅ…
AH, HE'S ALREADY SOUND ASLEEP.
ZZZ…

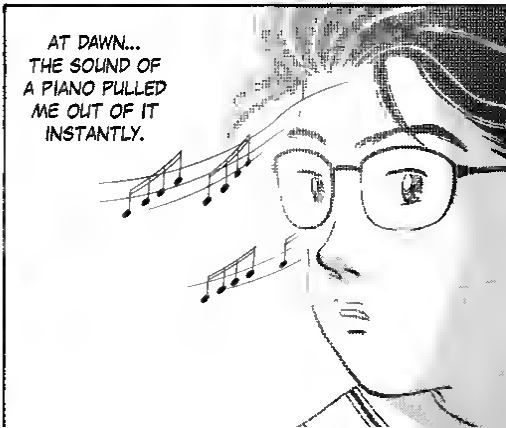

SIGH, YOU'RE REALLY EASY-GOING, KAI.
EASY-GOING, UNINHIBITED,


AND LUCKY.
THAT NIGHT, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A LONG WHILE, I WAS GIVEN REPRIEVE FROM THE DREAMS OF THE CLOWN.

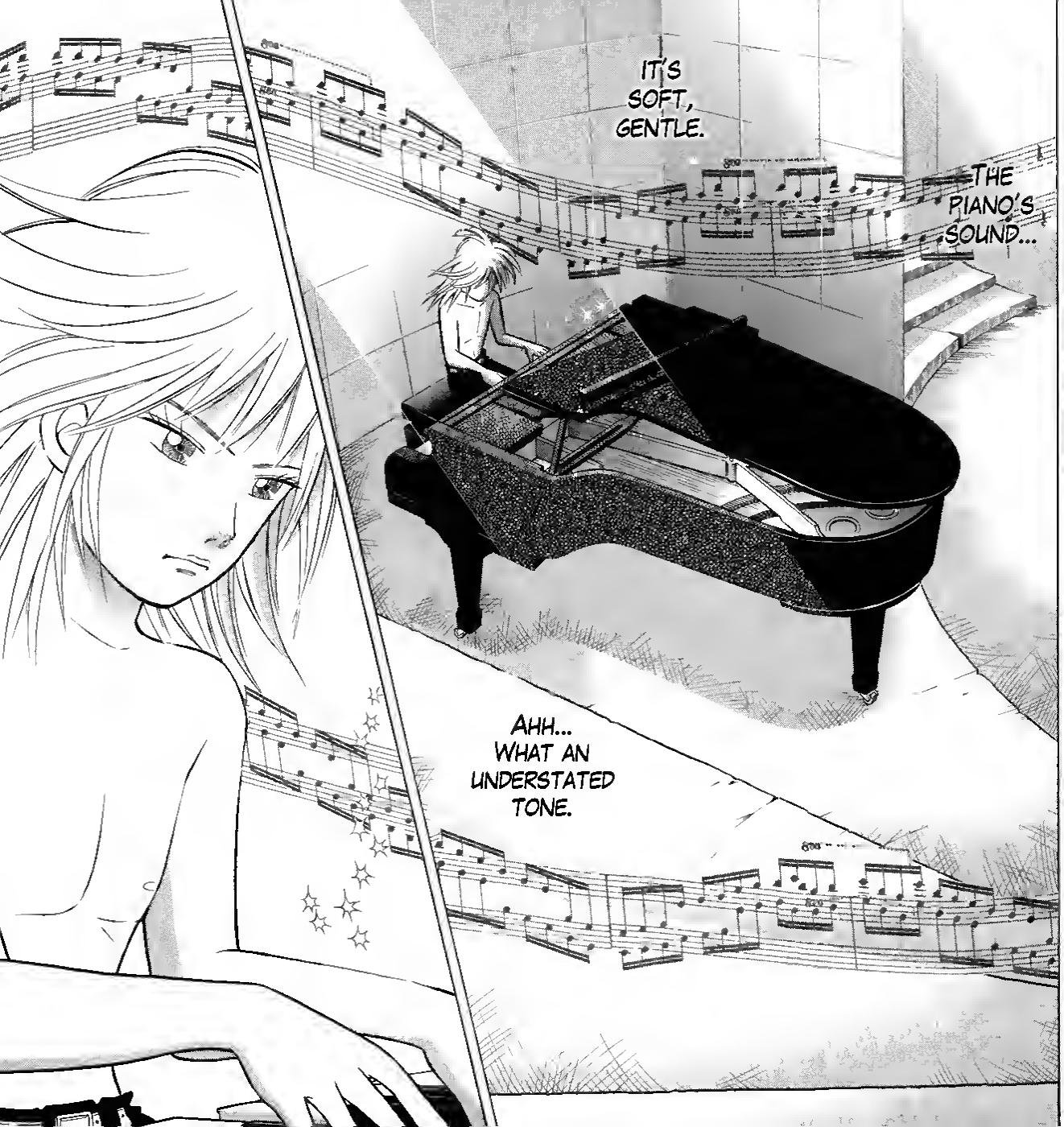
INSTEAD, I DREAMED THAT I WAS ON A BIKE, RIDING AND RIDING...
THROUGH A DESERT... WITH NEITHER SCENE NOR STORY.

RIGHT, I THINK HE SAID HE'D DO SOMETHING LIKE THAT LAST NIGHT.
KAI?
SOMEONE IS PLAYING THE PIANO.




AT DAWN... THE SOUND OF A PIANO PULLED ME OUT OF IT INSTANTLY.

THE BASIC AMONG THE BASIC...
THIS IS... HANON... ARPEGGIO...?
OF FINGER PRACTICES.


IT'S SOFT, GENTLE.
THE PIANO'S SOUND...
AHH... WHAT AN UNDERSTATED TONE.

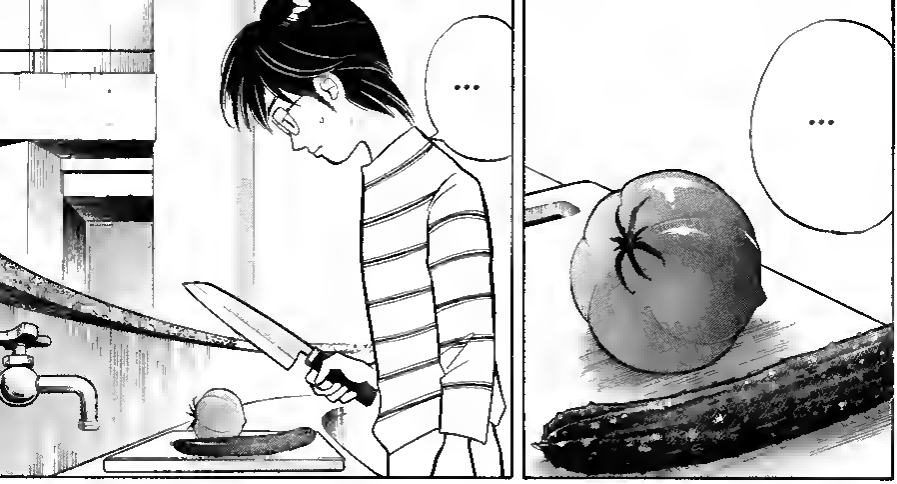
KIND OF LIKE A LITTLE KID TRYING HIS HARDEST TO REMEMBER HOW TO PLAY IT.
SLOWLY, TENTATIVELY...

THE METRONOME IS PROBABLY AT FORTY.
AND HE'S PLAYING IT QUITE SLOW.

BY THE TIME I GOT UP, IT WAS ALREADY 10 O'CLOCK.

RIGHT NOW...
AS MUCH AS I WANT...
Morning, Amamiya. There's some food in the fridge. Play the piano as much as you want! I'll be back around noon. Kai.
IMPOS-SIBLE.
MY FINGERS ARE REJECTING THE PIANO.
THAT'S...

WHEN DID KAI WAKE UP TO PLAY THE PIANO? GOING THROUGH ALL THOSE PRACTICE PIECES WOULD NORMALLY TAKE BETWEEN TWO AND FOUR HOURS... AND HE PLAYED IT EXTRA SLOW...
CREAK
AHA...
HE PUT A NOTE HERE, TOO...
SLICE UP THE TOMATO AND CELERY IN THE FRIDGE, PLACE THEM ON SOME BREAD, AND PUT IN THE TOASTER FOR THREE MINUTES. DONE!
WHAT'S THIS? HOW TO MAKE PIZZA TOAST?
HE PUTS NOTES ON EVERY-THING.

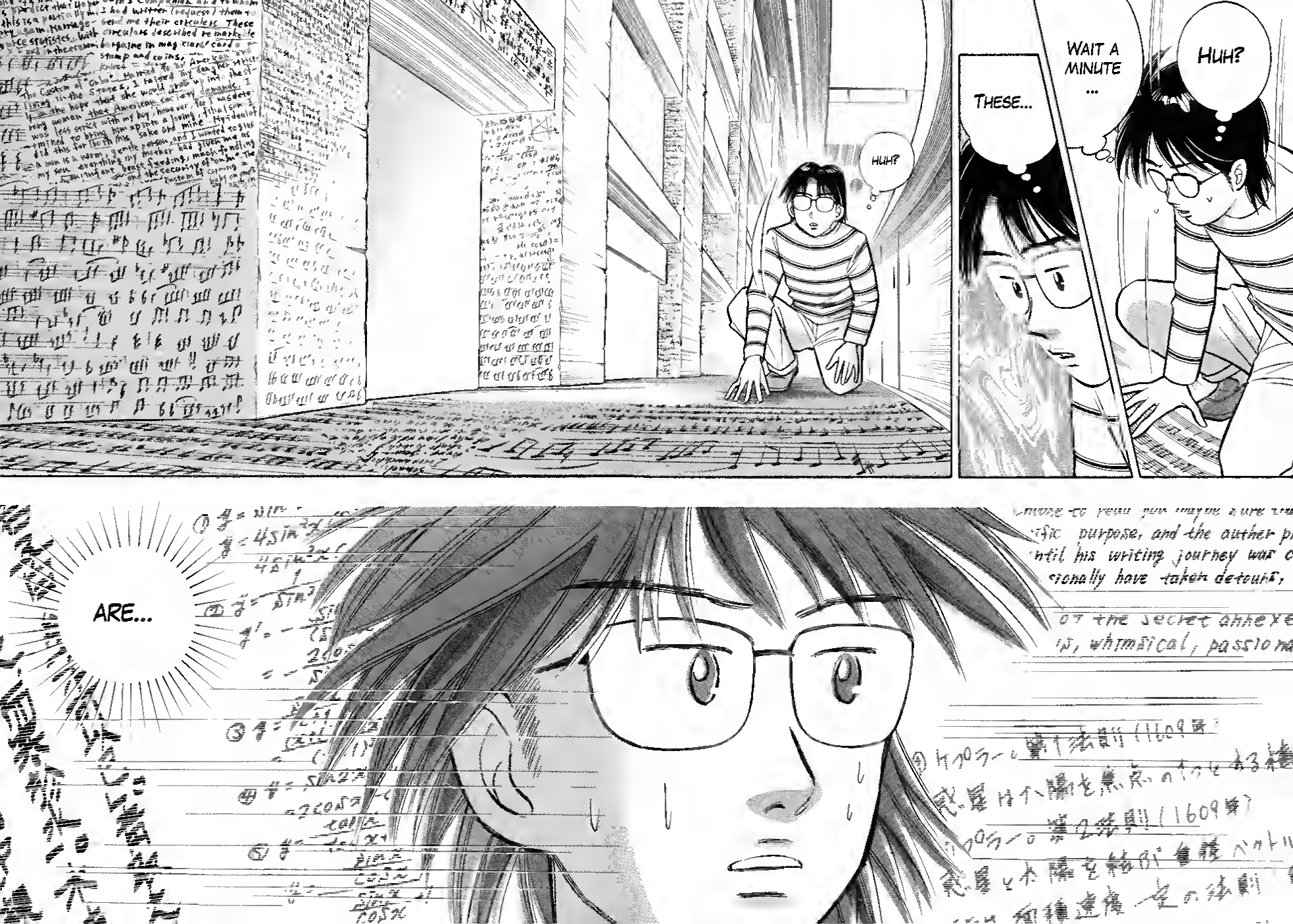

...
...

I'VE NEVER USED A KITCHEN KNIFE BEFORE.
WHAT TO DO...

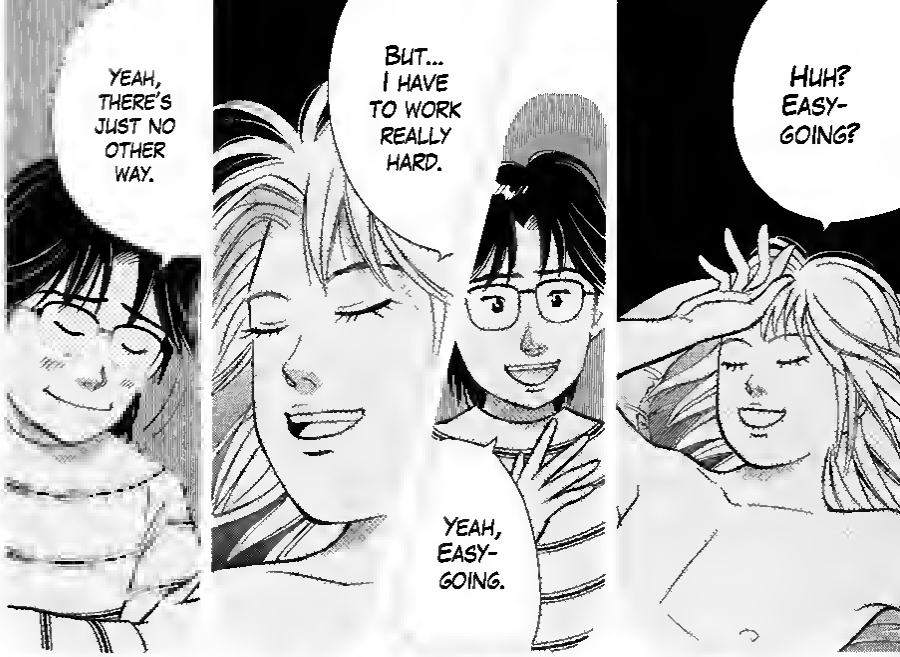
YEAH!
HUH, THERE'S CUP NOODLES HERE!?
GOOD! I'LL JUST EAT THAT!
みそラーメン
麺

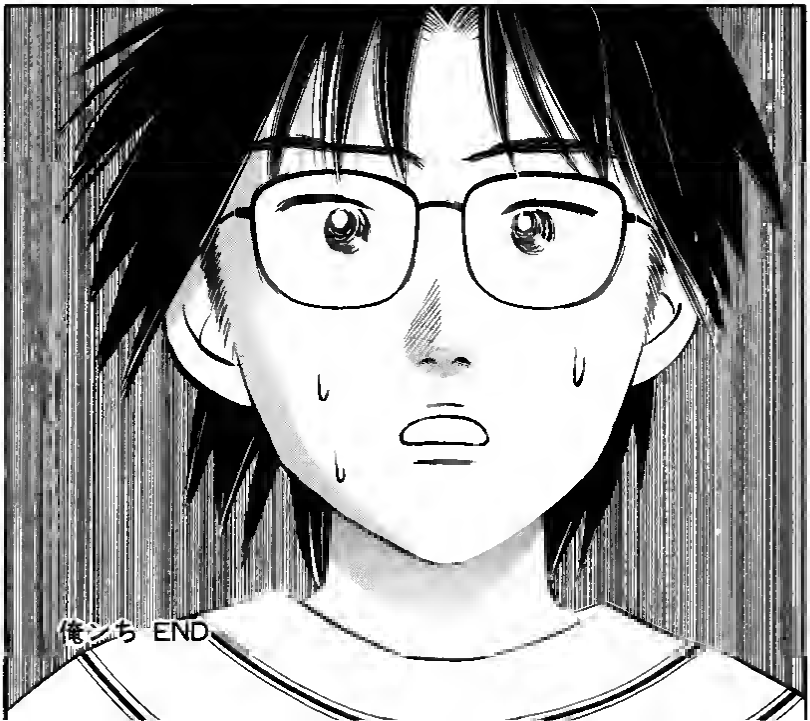
麺
AHAHA...
KAI'S WRITING HIS NOTES DIRECTLY ON THE FURNISHINGS.
WHAT'S THIS?
HE'S GOT A RECIPE WRITTEN HERE...?
IF I LOOK MORE CLOSELY, I CAN SEE THEM ALL OVER THE PLACE.
THIS IS AMAZING!
WELL, IT IS A BUILDING THAT COULD BE DEMOLISHED AT ANY MOMENT.
IT'S SO JAM-PACKED, IT'S HARD TO NOTICE THEM ALL.
THESE CAN'T BE CALLED NOTES ANYMORE. IT'S MORE LIKE GRAFFITI.

OH, HEY! THIS HERE IS ENGLISH.
KAI'S SURPRISED ME YET AGAIN!
HE'S DOING CALCULA-TIONS.
OH, ISN'T THIS MATH?
A MUSICAL SCORE!!
WOW!
.....


HUH?
THESE...
WAIT A MINUTE ...
HUH?
ARE...

THE ENTIRE BUILDING IS FILLED WITH EVIDENCE OF KAI'S STUDIES.
EVIDENCE OF KAI'S STUDIES.


YEAH, THERE'S JUST NO OTHER WAY.
BUT... I HAVE TO WORK REALLY HARD.
YEAH, EASY-GOING.
HUH? EASY-GOING?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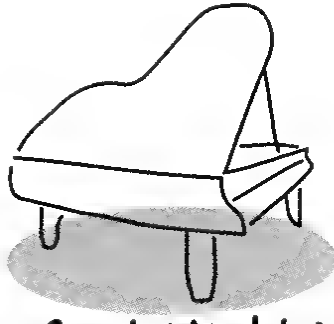

The Perfect World of KAI

To be continued in volume 9...

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